W.i.t.c.h
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Will Irma Taranee Cornelia Hay Lin
Part III.
A Crisis on Both Worlds
Volume 1
THE GRAPHIC NOVEL
Disney
COMICS

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Will Irma Taranee Cornelia Hay Lin

Part III.
A Crisis on Both Worlds
Volume I

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 25
Water Shadows
3

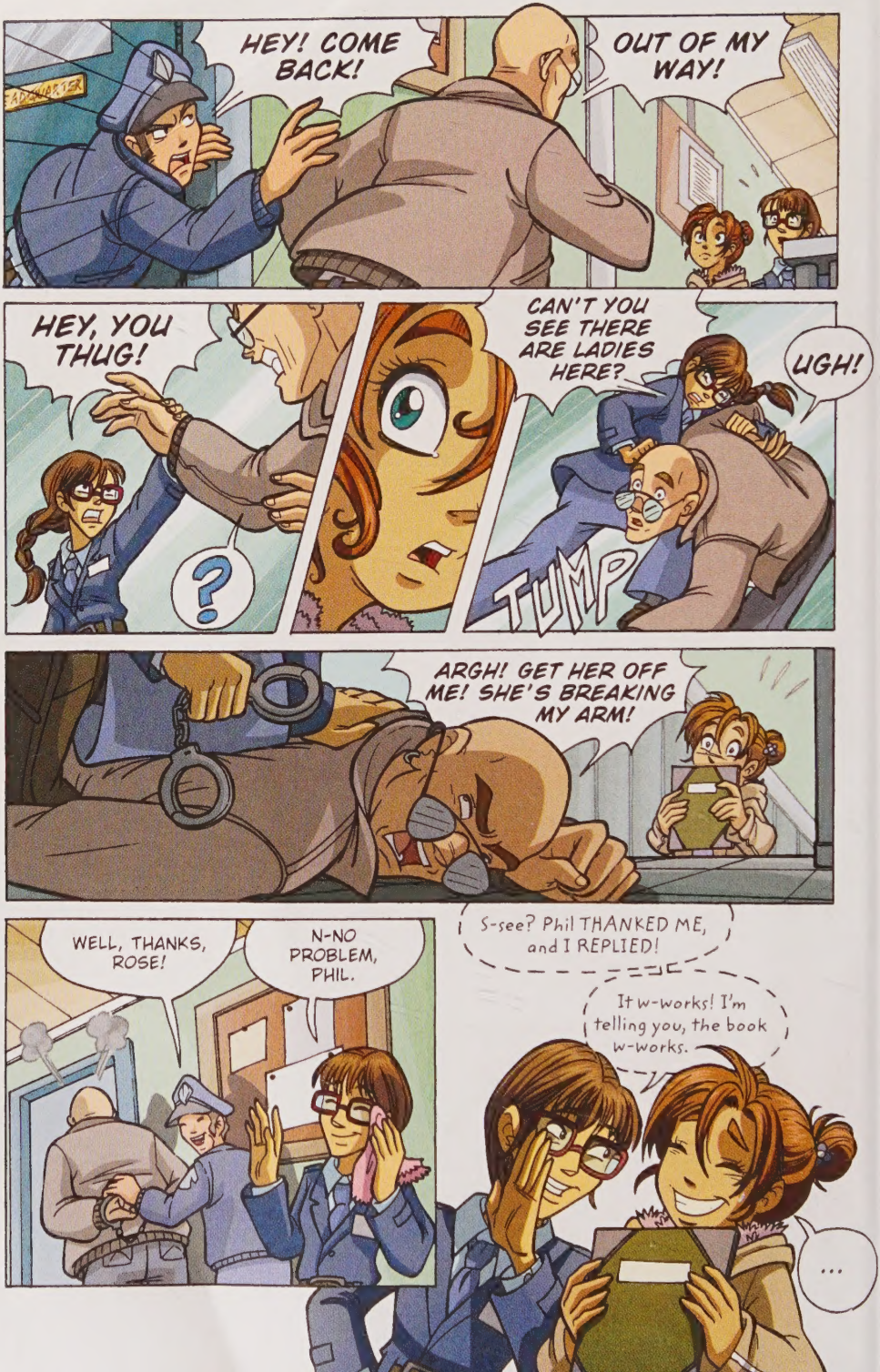
CHAPTER 26
The Ultimate Blackmail
65

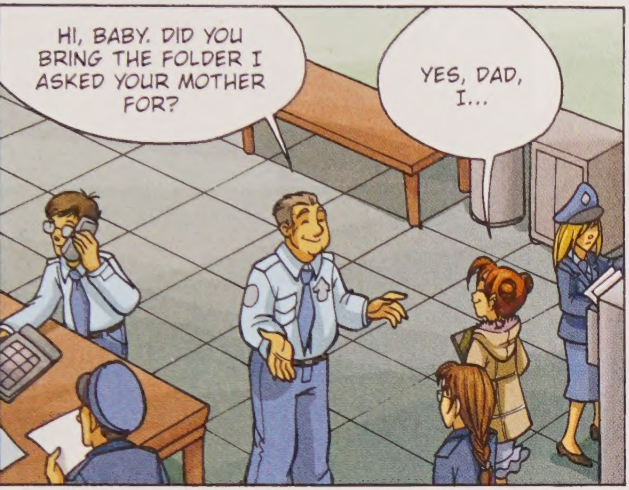
CHAPTER 27
The Departure
127

CHAPTER 28
So Near, Yet So Far
189

Water Shadows
"I can still hear his voice..."

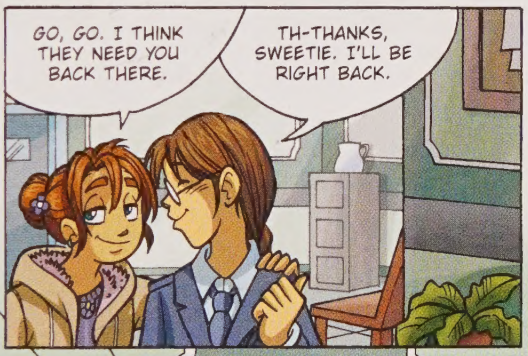
IT'S UNDENIABLE. HEATHERFIELD POLICE STATION IS A BIT SCARY.
ARAGE
EVEN THOUGH IT'S ACTUALLY A PRETTY QUIET PLACE...
HI, ROSE! IS DAD HERE?
H-HI, IRMA! YES, BUT HE'S VERY BUSY.
DO YOU NOTICE ANYTHING N-NEW ABOUT ME?
IT'S USUALLY TOO QUIET FOR SOMEONE LIKE IRMA WHO LOVES EXCITEMENT, BUT TODAY THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET LIVELY IN HER DAD'S OFFICE.
OH...I DON'T KNOW... ANYWAY, CAN I GIVE DAD THE FILE HE ASKED FOR?
F-FOLLOW ME. IT'S A BIT MESSY BECAUSE OF TH- THE R-RAID AT THE DOCKS!
I DECIDED TO Q-QUIT B-BEING SO SHY, Y'KNOW?
ERM. THAT'S GREAT! DID YOU SAY A RAID?
MARK ZIBOSKY AND HIS A-ASSOCIATES. TWELVE ARRESTS FOR ILLEGAL BETTING.
I B-BOUGHT A BOOK ABOUT SELF-ESTEEM. IT W-WORKS!

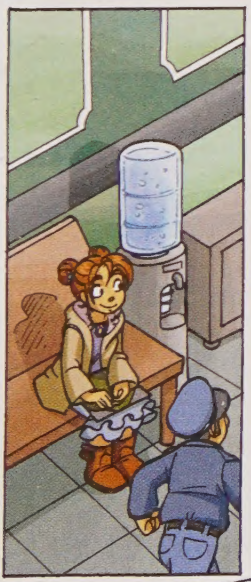

HEY! COME BACK!
OUT OF MY WAY!
HEY, YOU THUG!
?
CAN'T YOU SEE THERE ARE LADIES HERE?
UGH!
THUMP
ARGH! GET HER OFF ME! SHE'S BREAKING MY ARM!
WELL, THANKS, ROSE!
N-NO PROBLEM, PHIL.
S-see? Phil THANKED ME, and I REPLIED!
It w-works! I'm telling you, the book w-works.
...

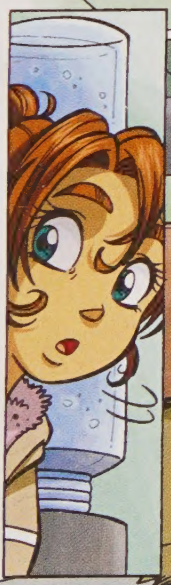

HI, BABY. DID YOU BRING THE FOLDER I ASKED YOUR MOTHER FOR?
YES, DAD, I...

TOM! ANOTHER ONE IS KICKING OFF!
COMING!

WHAT A DAY. ROSE, CAN YOU PLEASE KEEP HER COMPANY?
Y-YES. B-BUT DON'T YOU NEED A HAND?


GO, GO. I THINK THEY NEED YOU BACK THERE.
TH-THANKS, SWEETIE. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

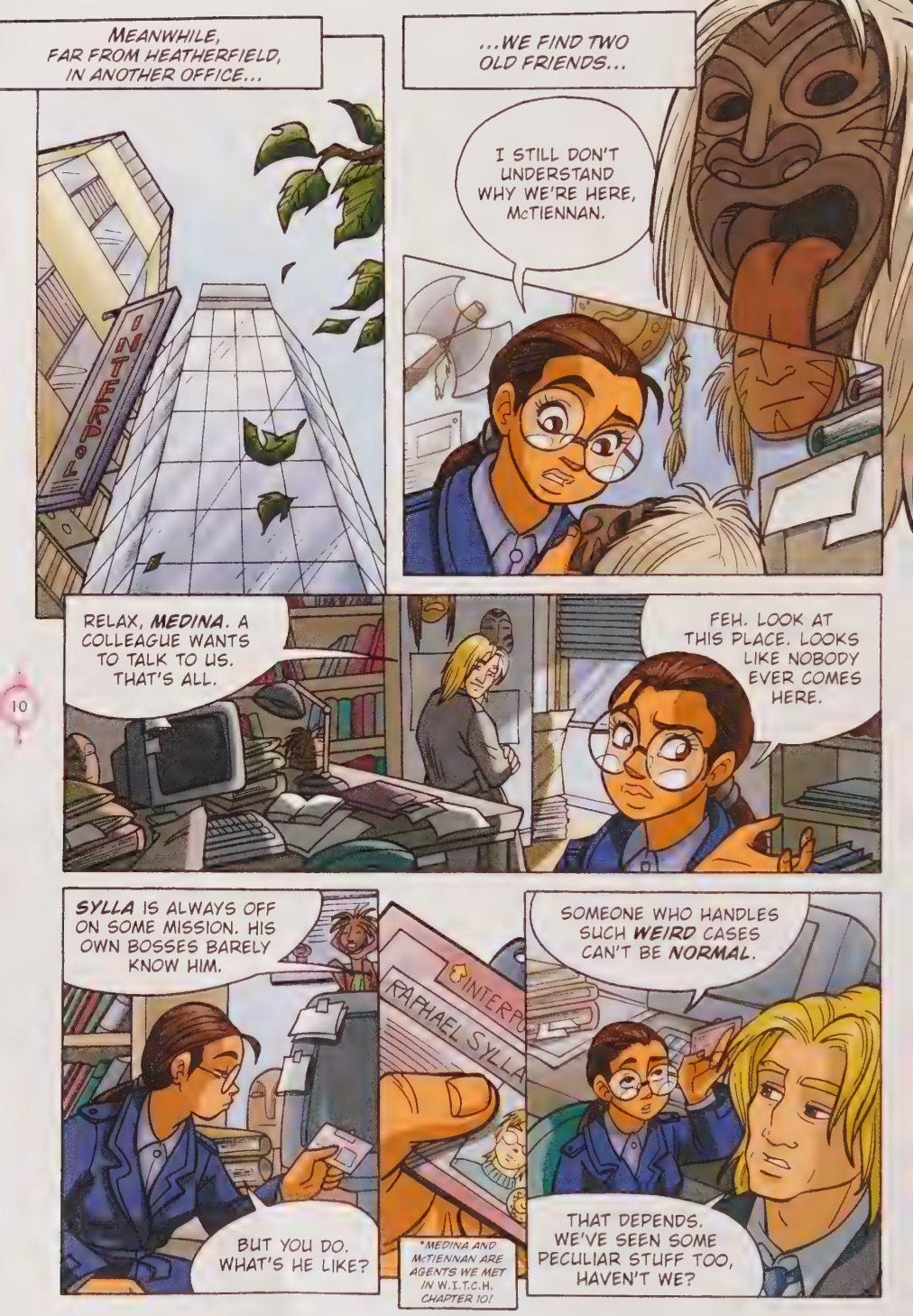


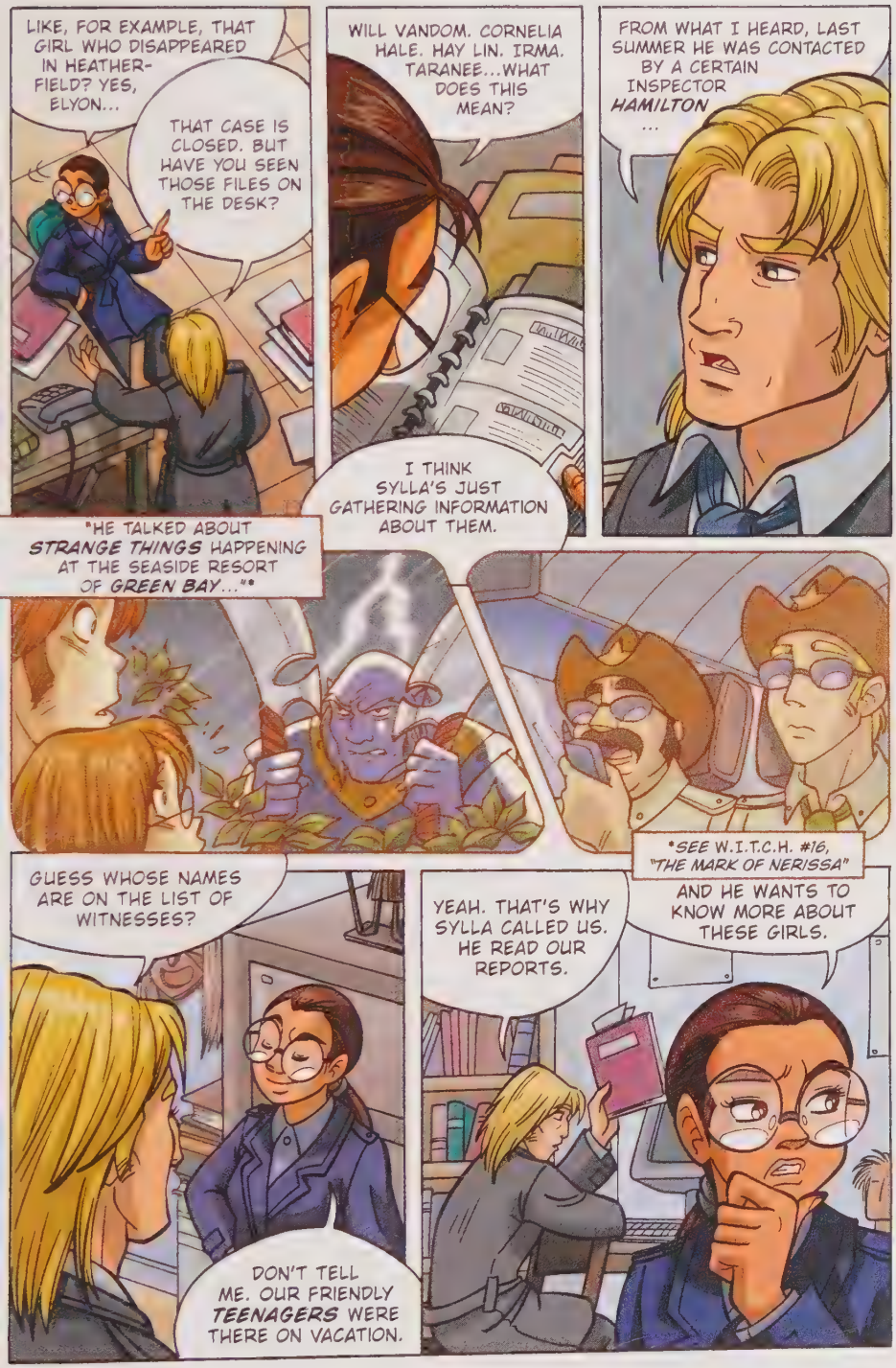


?

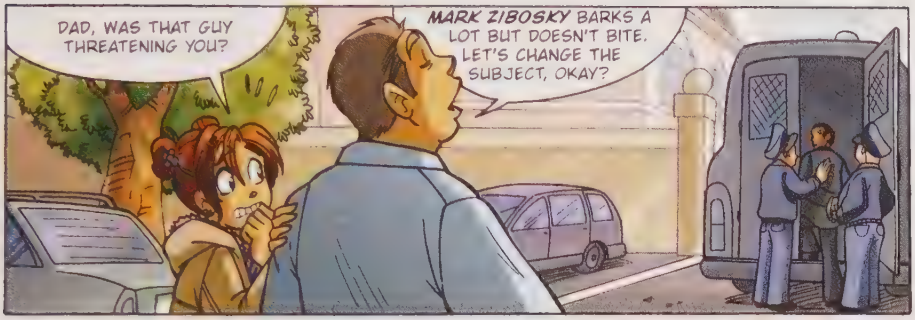
UM, ARE YOU THIRSTY?
ONLY YOU COULD OFFER ME A GLASS OF WATER IN THIS SITUATION.
YOU, THE QUEEN OF WATER!
FRUUSSHHH
?

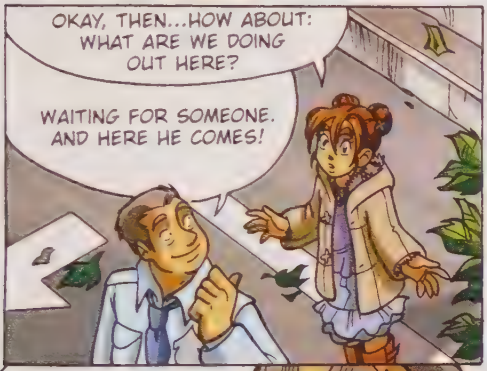
WHAT DID YOU SAY? I DON'T GET IT.
YES YOU DO. IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN SET ME FREE!
I'M SORRY. I... I REALLY DON'T THINK I CAN.
OH YES YOU CAN. YOU CERTAINLY HAVE THE POWER TO.
AND I WASN'T TALKING ABOUT THESE HANDCUFFS.
COME ON, MAN. WE HAVE SOME FORMS TO FILL OUT.

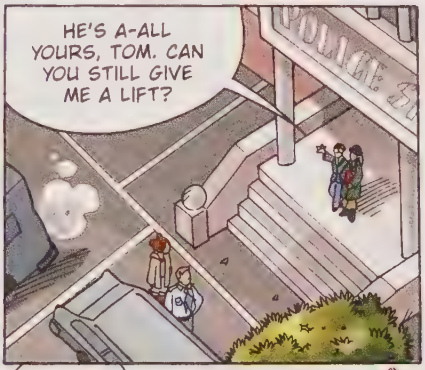

MEANWHILE, FAR FROM HEATHERFIELD, IN ANOTHER OFFICE...
...WE FIND TWO OLD FRIENDS...
I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE'RE HERE, McTIENNAN.
RELAX, MEDINA. A COLLEAGUE WANTS TO TALK TO US. THAT'S ALL.
FEH. LOOK AT THIS PLACE. LOOKS LIKE NOBODY EVER COMES HERE.
SYLLA IS ALWAYS OFF ON SOME MISSION. HIS OWN BOSSES BARELY KNOW HIM.
RAPHAEL SYLLA
BUT YOU DO. WHAT'S HE LIKE?
SOMEONE WHO HANDLES SUCH WEIRD CASES CAN'T BE NORMAL.
THAT DEPENDS. WE'VE SEEN SOME PECULIAR STUFF TOO, HAVEN'T WE?
*MEDINA AND McTIENNAN ARE AGENTS WE MET IN W.I.T.C.H. CHAPTER 10!

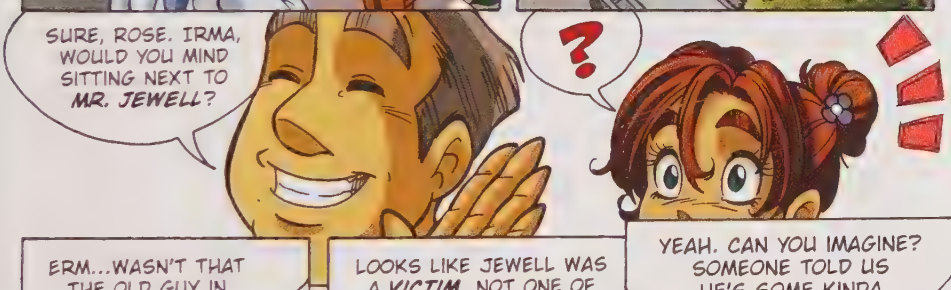

LIKE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT GIRL WHO DISAPPEARED IN HEATHER-FIELD? YES, ELYON...
THAT CASE IS CLOSED. BUT HAVE YOU SEEN THOSE FILES ON THE DESK?
WILL VANDOM. CORNELIA HALE. HAY LIN. IRMA. TARANEE...WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?
I THINK SYLLA'S JUST GATHERING INFORMATION ABOUT THEM.
FROM WHAT I HEARD, LAST SUMMER HE WAS CONTACTED BY A CERTAIN INSPECTOR HAMILTON ...
"HE TALKED ABOUT STRANGE THINGS HAPPENING AT THE SEASIDE RESORT OF GREEN BAY..."*
*SEE W.I.T.C.H. #16, "THE MARK OF NERISSA"
GUESS WHOSE NAMES ARE ON THE LIST OF WITNESSES?
DON'T TELL ME. OUR FRIENDLY TEENAGERS WERE THERE ON VACATION.
YEAH. THAT'S WHY SYLLA CALLED US. HE READ OUR REPORTS.
AND HE WANTS TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THESE GIRLS.

THEY'RE HIDING SOMETHING, AREN'T THEY, McTIENNAN?
?
RALPH!
GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, JOEL. AND THIS MUST BE MARIA MEDINA.
WHAT'S UP, DEAR COLLEAGUE?
WELL, I'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT YOU, BUT I DIDN'T PICTURE YOU SO... SO...
FASCINATING? FILM-STAR HANDSOME?
THE WORD I WAS LOOKING FOR WAS SCRUFFY.
MEANWHILE, AT HEATHERFIELD POLICE STATION...
SEE YOU AROUND, COP!


DAD, WAS THAT GUY THREATENING YOU?
MARK ZIBOSKY BARKS A LOT BUT DOESN'T BITE. LET'S CHANGE THE SUBJECT, OKAY?


OKAY, THEN...HOW ABOUT: WHAT ARE WE DOING OUT HERE?
WAITING FOR SOMEONE. AND HERE HE COMES!

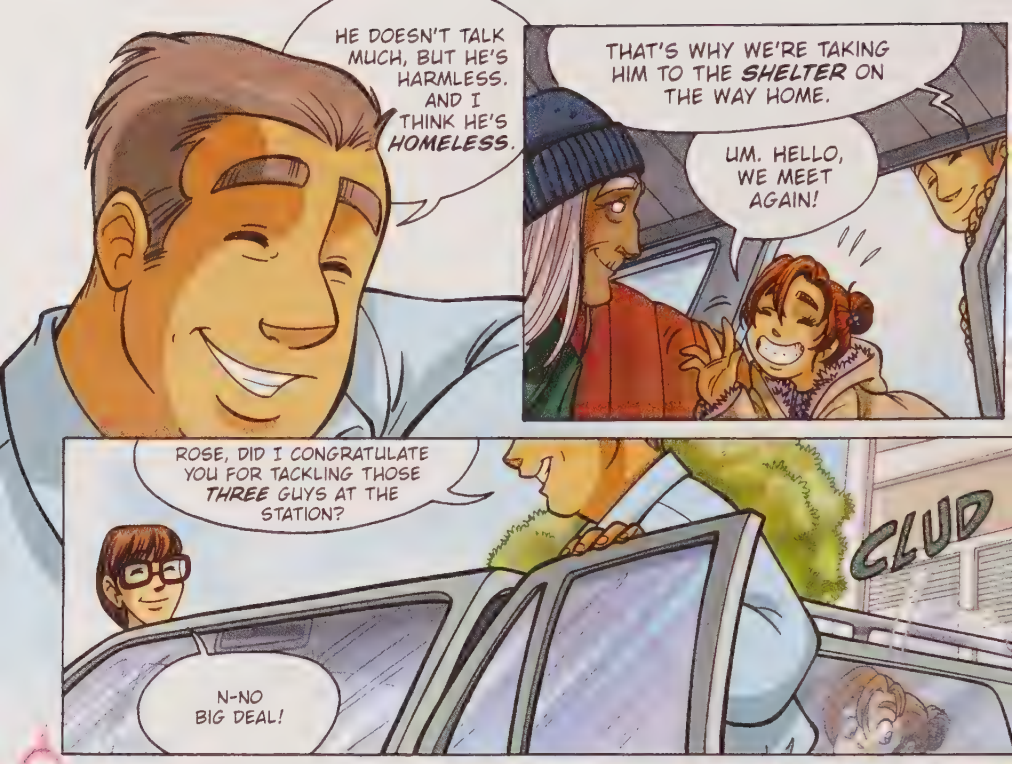

HE'S A-ALL YOURS, TOM. CAN YOU STILL GIVE ME A LIFT?


SURE, ROSE. IRMA, WOULD YOU MIND SITTING NEXT TO MR. JEWELL?
?

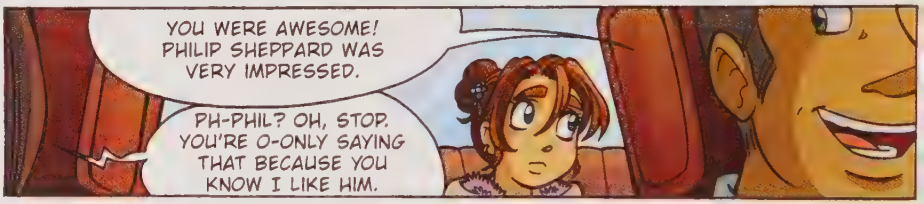
ERM...WASN'T THAT THE OLD GUY IN HANDCUFFS?
DON'T WORRY, JUST A MIX-UP DURING THE RAID.

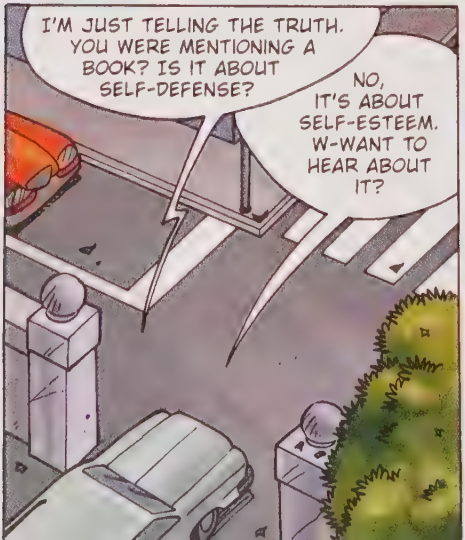
LOOKS LIKE JEWELL WAS A VICTIM, NOT ONE OF ZIBOSKY'S MEN.
POOR GUY. THEY KEPT HIM LOCKED UP IN A DAMP, DARK CELLAR.

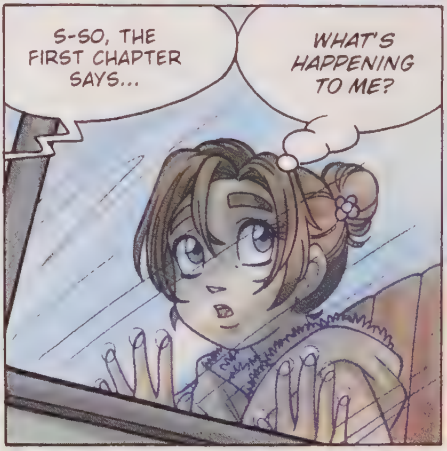
YEAH. CAN YOU IMAGINE? SOMEONE TOLD US HE'S SOME KINDA PSYCHIC!


HE DOESN'T TALK MUCH, BUT HE'S HARMLESS. AND I THINK HE'S HOMELESS.
THAT'S WHY WE'RE TAKING HIM TO THE SHELTER ON THE WAY HOME.
UM. HELLO, WE MEET AGAIN!

ROSE, DID I CONGRATULATE YOU FOR TACKLING THOSE THREE GUYS AT THE STATION?
N-NO BIG DEAL!
CLUD


YOU WERE AWESOME! PHILIP SHEPPARD WAS VERY IMPRESSED.
PH-PHIL? OH, STOP. YOU'RE O-ONLY SAYING THAT BECAUSE YOU KNOW I LIKE HIM.


I'M JUST TELLING THE TRUTH. YOU WERE MENTIONING A BOOK? IS IT ABOUT SELF-DEFENSE?
NO, IT'S ABOUT SELF-ESTEEM. W-WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT?

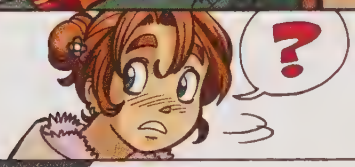

S-SO, THE FIRST CHAPTER SAYS...
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?

THIS MAN SCARES ME, BUT I FEEL LIKE I KNOW HIM. THERE'S SOMETHING FAMILIAR ABOUT HIM.
HE LOOKS A BIT WEIRD, BUT HIS EYES ARE SO...
...DEEP!
LIKE THE SEA!
HUH? C-COME AGAIN?
WOULD YOU LEND ME THE PEN YOU HAVE IN YOUR POCKET?
I...UH, SURE! I THINK I HAVE ONE IN MY...
...POCKET.
TH-THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! HOW'D HE KNOW?

WHAT IF HE'S REALLY A PSYCHIC? I MEAN, I'VE SEEN STRANGER THINGS.

I COULD PUT HIM TO THE TEST. THE GIRLS ALL HAVE BOYFRIENDS. I COULD ASK HIM IF ONE DAY I WILL TOO...

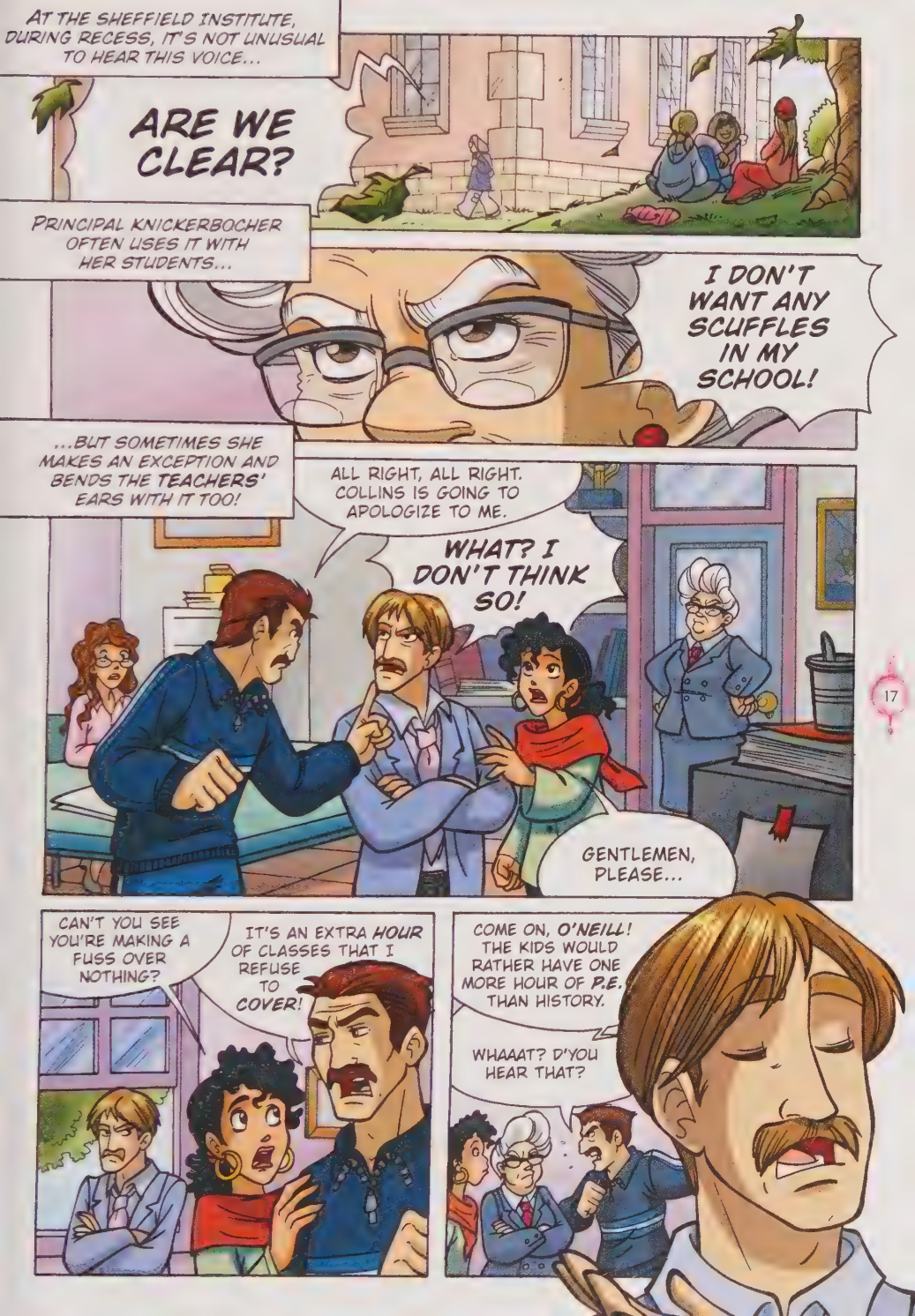
SORRY, I MAKE SHORT-TERM PREDICTIONS. I CAN'T SEE SO FAR AHEAD!

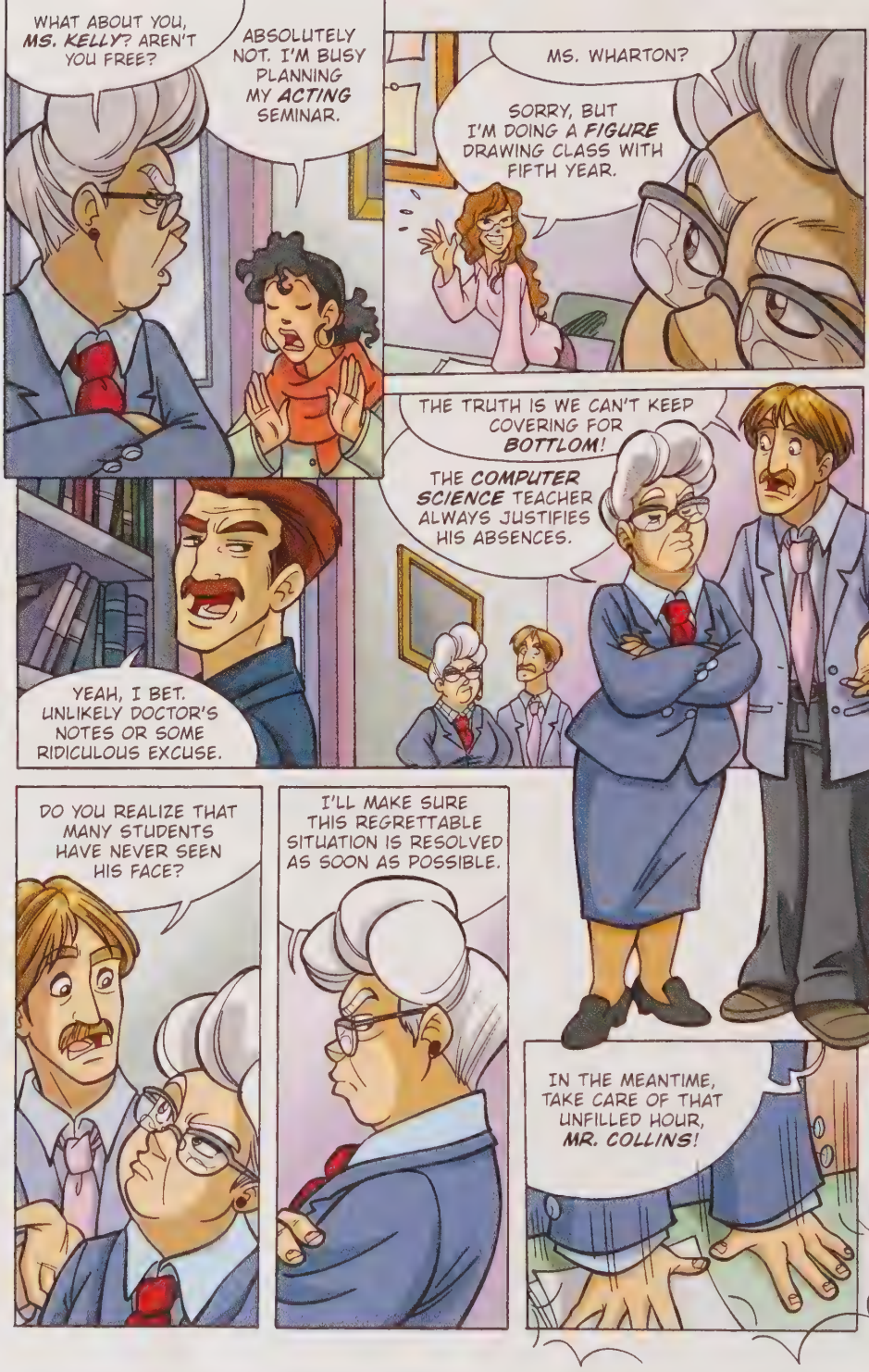

?

But how can you...?

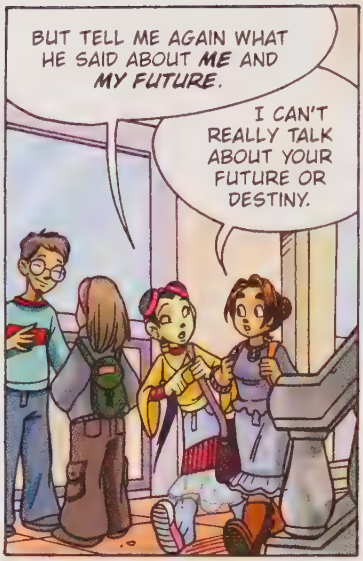
I...I didn't say a word!
All I can say is that your fate is tied to that of FOUR FRIENDS.

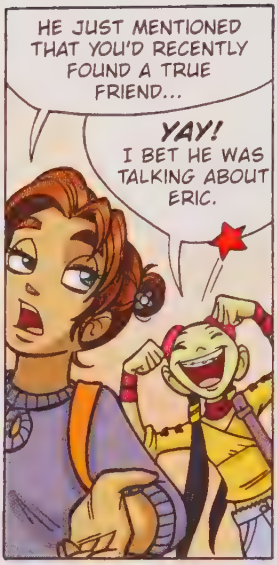
Listen. Some of them are in trouble, and you are PART OF A WHOLE, so...
...if you want to help yourself, you'll have to help them first.

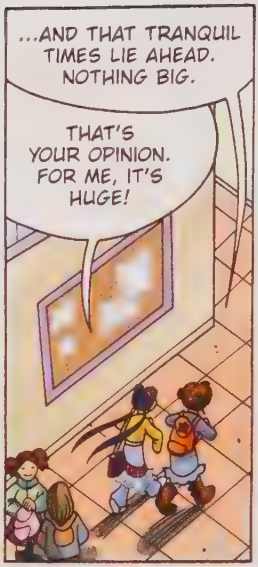

AT THE SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE, DURING RECESS, IT'S NOT UNUSUAL TO HEAR THIS VOICE...
ARE WE CLEAR?
PRINCIPAL KNICKERBOCHER OFTEN USES IT WITH HER STUDENTS...
I DON'T WANT ANY SCUFFLES IN MY SCHOOL!
...BUT SOMETIMES SHE MAKES AN EXCEPTION AND BENDS THE TEACHERS' EARS WITH IT TOO!
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT. COLLINS IS GOING TO APOLOGIZE TO ME.
WHAT? I DON'T THINK SO!
GENTLEMEN, PLEASE...
CAN'T YOU SEE YOU'RE MAKING A FUSS OVER NOTHING?
IT'S AN EXTRA HOUR OF CLASSES THAT I REFUSE TO COVER!
COME ON, O'NEILL! THE KIDS WOULD RATHER HAVE ONE MORE HOUR OF P.E. THAN HISTORY.
WHAAAT? D'YOU HEAR THAT?

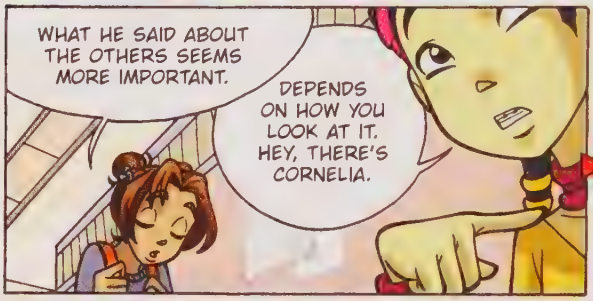

WHAT ABOUT YOU, MS. KELLY? AREN'T YOU FREE?
ABSOLUTELY NOT. I'M BUSY PLANNING MY ACTING SEMINAR.
MS. WHARTON?
SORRY, BUT I'M DOING A FIGURE DRAWING CLASS WITH FIFTH YEAR.
THE TRUTH IS WE CAN'T KEEP COVERING FOR BOTTLOM!
THE COMPUTER SCIENCE TEACHER ALWAYS JUSTIFIES HIS ABSENCES.
YEAH, I BET. UNLIKELY DOCTOR'S NOTES OR SOME RIDICULOUS EXCUSE.
DO YOU REALIZE THAT MANY STUDENTS HAVE NEVER SEEN HIS FACE?
I'LL MAKE SURE THIS REGRETTABLE SITUATION IS RESOLVED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
IN THE MEANTIME, TAKE CARE OF THAT UNFILLED HOUR, MR. COLLINS!

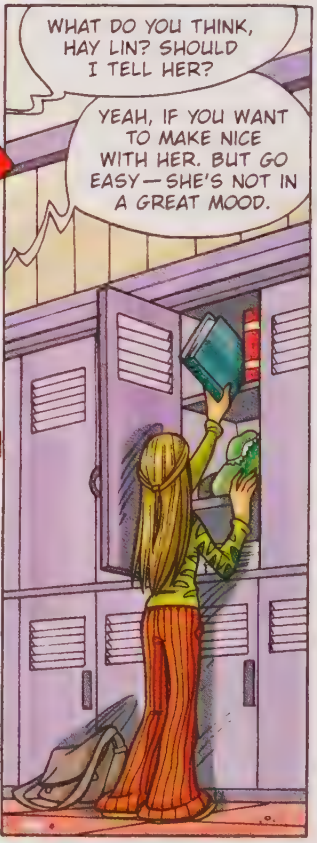
WITH SUCH A BAD START, IT MIGHT NOT BE A GREAT DAY AT SCHOOL.
AND THE STUDENTS SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE EXTRA HOUR OF HISTORY...
COME ON, IRMA. SOONER OR LATER, COLLINS WOULD HAVE GRILLED YOU. YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT.
TELL MY DAD. WITH THAT GRADE, I COULD BE UNDER HOUSE ARREST FOR LIFE.
Then, even though we shouldn't, why didn't you MANIPULATE him?
Yeah, I close my eyes, rub my hands, and... poof, he asks me whatever I want!
YOU THINK I DIDN'T TRY THAT, HAY LIN? I COULDN'T FOCUS.
STILL THINKING ABOUT THAT OLD MAN, HUH?
YOU'RE NOT GONNA TELL THE OTHERS, ARE YOU?
ARE YOU KIDDING? I SWORE I WOULDN'T!
GOOD, BECAUSE JEWELL MADE ME PROMISE I WOULDN'T TELL ANYONE.
SECRETS SURE ARE SAFE WITH YOU!

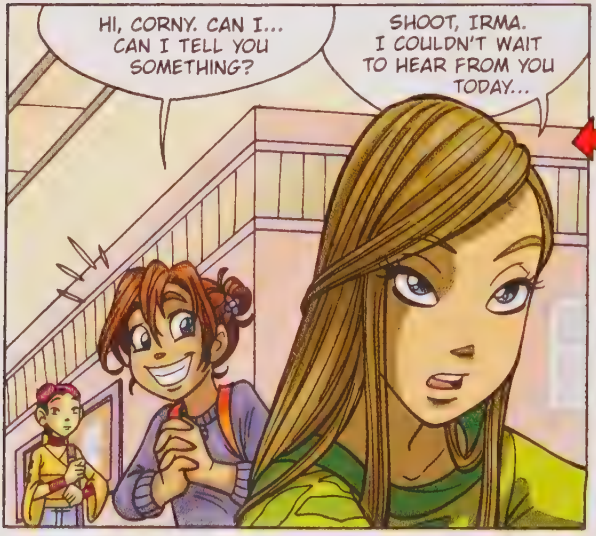

BUT TELL ME AGAIN WHAT HE SAID ABOUT ME AND MY FUTURE.
I CAN'T REALLY TALK ABOUT YOUR FUTURE OR DESTINY.


HE JUST MENTIONED THAT YOU'D RECENTLY FOUND A TRUE FRIEND...
YAY! I BET HE WAS TALKING ABOUT ERIC.


...AND THAT TRANQUIL TIMES LIE AHEAD. NOTHING BIG.
THAT'S YOUR OPINION. FOR ME, IT'S HUGE!


WHAT HE SAID ABOUT THE OTHERS SEEMS MORE IMPORTANT.
DEPENDS ON HOW YOU LOOK AT IT. HEY, THERE'S CORNELIA.


WHAT DO YOU THINK, HAY LIN? SHOULD I TELL HER?
YEAH, IF YOU WANT TO MAKE NICE WITH HER. BUT GO EASY—SHE'S NOT IN A GREAT MOOD.


HI, CORNY. CAN I... CAN I TELL YOU SOMETHING?
SHOOT, IRMA. I COULDN'T WAIT TO HEAR FROM YOU TODAY...

WELL, I...I THINK YOU SHOULD TAKE UP ICE SKATING AGAIN.
?
WHAT DO YOU CARE? YOU'VE NEVER SEEN ME SKATE.
WELL, IT'S JUST... IT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU... YOU...
...YOU'LL BE ABLE TO FORGET YOUR HEARTBREAK!
21
THERE. I SAID IT!
WELL, NOW LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING.
SBAM
IF I EVER DECIDE TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT CALEB, IT WON'T BE YOU! ARE WE CLEAR?

WELL DONE! I KNOW AN ELEPHANT WHO'S LESS CLUMSY THAN YOU ARE.
I DON'T KNOW WHY, BU I REALL BELIEVE WHAT JEWELL TOLD ME.
WHO'S THIS JEWELL? SOME GUY I DON'T KNOW YET?
HUH? H-HI, WILL! HE'S NOBODY. NOBODY, SERIOUSLY.
HAVE YOU SEEN CORNELIA? SHE WAS HERE A MINUTE AGO...
YES, BUT WHILE YOU'RE HERE, I'D LIKE TO HAVE A QUICK WORD ABOUT SOMETHING.
ERM...POSSIBLY IN PRIVATE. IT'S A DELICATE ISSUE THAT CONCERNS YOU.
OH NO. HERE WE GO AGAIN...
IT'S ABOUT MATT, ISN'T IT? YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT US, RIGHT?
HUH? NO, NO. I...

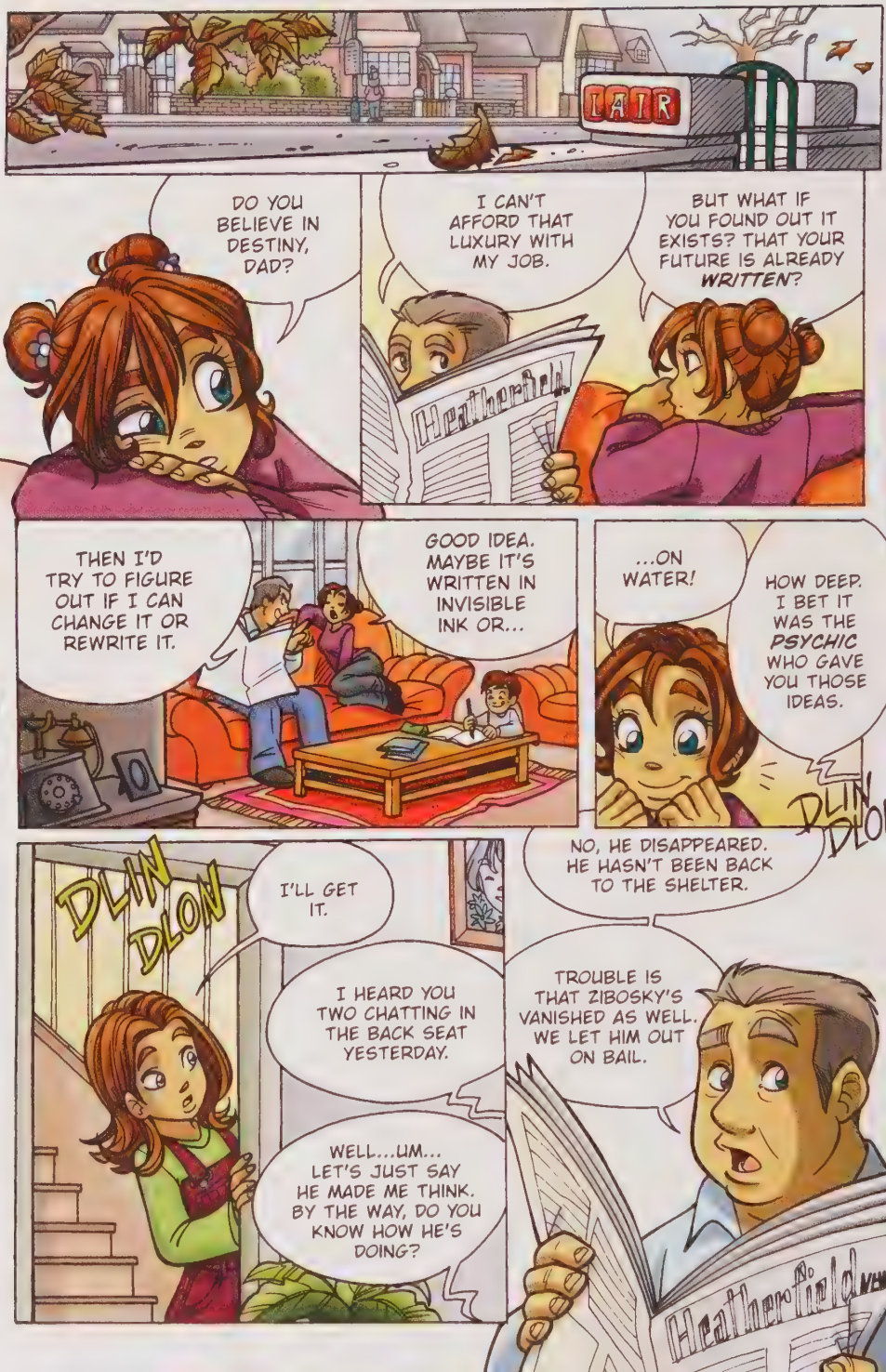
WELL, IF YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW, HE'S NOT TALKING TO ME ANYMORE.
HE MUST STILL BE UPSET ABOUT MY SCENE OVER MANDY ANDERSON.*
*SEE W.I.T.C.H. CHAPTER 24
WOULD IT OFFEND YOU IF I SAID MAYBE HE'S GOT A POINT?
I WAS SO STUPID... I KEEP TELLING MYSELF THAT.
ANYWAY, I DIDN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT MATT.
AH...NO?
I WOULD NEVER STICK MY NOSE INTO YOUR BUSINESS.
WELL THEN, MY BAD. WHAT'D YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT?
UM... ABOUT YOUR FATHER.
?

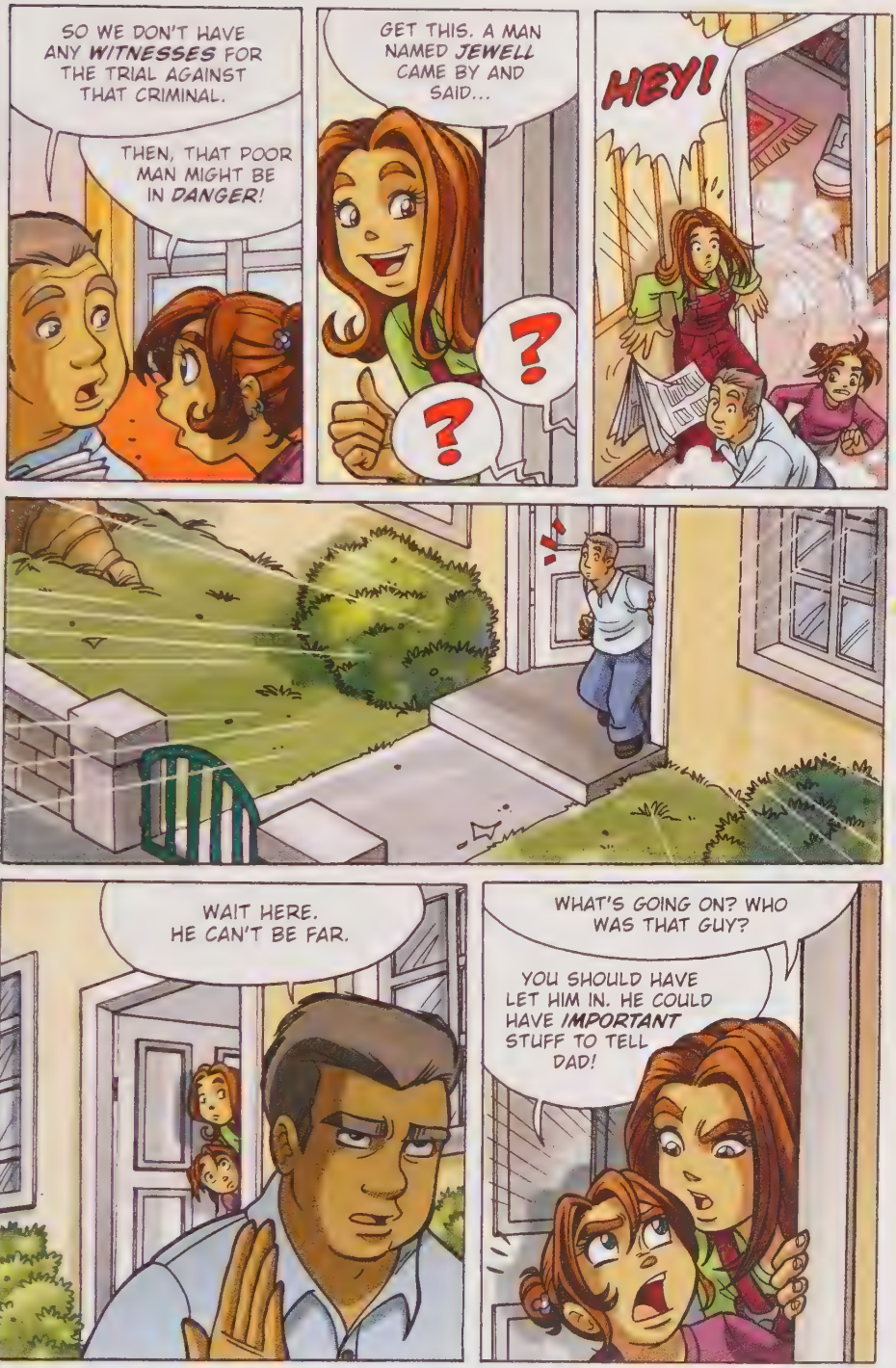
LATER, OUTSIDE OF THE SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE...
SO WILL REALLY TOLD YOU TO BUZZ OFF?
TO PUT IT MILDLY, YES.
WHAT DID JEWELL SAY THAT WAS SO PERSONAL?
HE TOLD ME SHE SHOULDN'T GET TOO ATTACHED TO HER DAD 'COS HE'LL MAKE HER SUFFER.
OUCH. I THINK THAT QUALIFIES AS WAY TOO PERSONAL!
IF YOU ADD THE FACT THAT SHE'S FIGHTING WITH HER MOM AND MATT...
"...IT'S NORMAL SHE'D TAKE HER DAD'S SIDE. HE'S A COOL GUY, OR AT LEAST SO IT SEEMS..."
ALL RIGHT. YOU BOTCHED IT WITH TWO FRIENDS. YOU'RE MISSING OUT WITH TARANEE.
YEAH. I WANTED TO END WITH A BANG, BUT SHE RAN OFF RIGHT AFTER CLASS.
JEWELL GOT REALLY MYSTERIOUS ABOUT HER. HE SAID SHE HAS A SECRET...

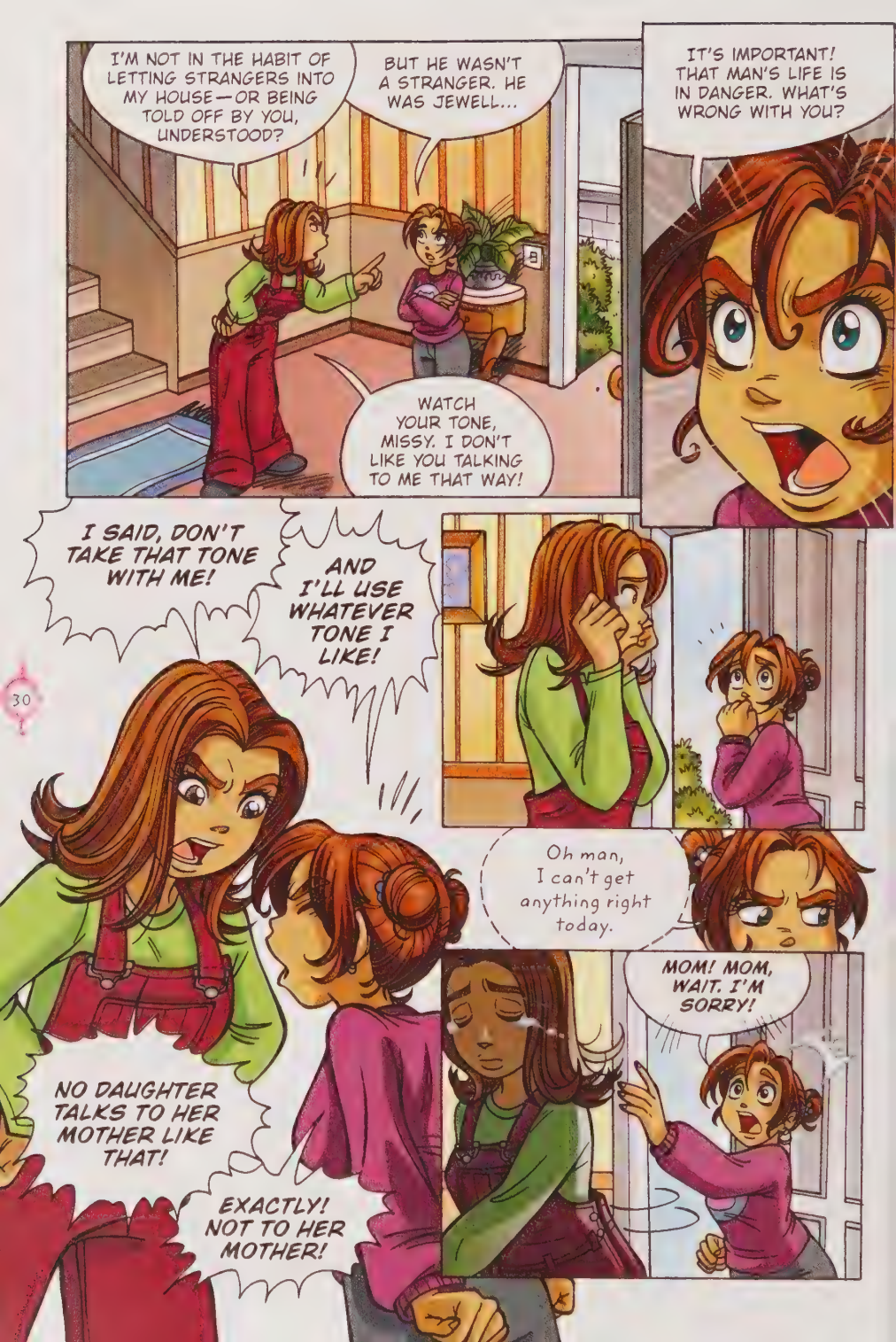
"...AND THAT SHE'LL HAVE TO MAKE AN IMPORTANT DECISION ABOUT TELLING IT TO THE RIGHT PERSON!"
I HOPE YOU HAVEN'T TOLD ANYONE.
DON'T WORRY, MOM. YOUR DEVIOUS PLANS ARE SAFE.
SCREEK
WHAT'S THE MATTER, TARANEE? I'VE NEVER HEARD YOU SAY ANYTHING LIKE THAT.
IT MEANS I'VE CHANGED... AND YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED.
25
THE FACT THAT YOU FOUND SUSAN VANDOM'S FILE IN MY OFFICE DOESN'T MEAN...
YOU'RE ABOUT TO PUT MY FRIEND'S MOTHER ON TRIAL!
OH, COME ON! I'M A JUDGE. HER FILE LANDED ON MY DESK. I'M JUST DOING MY JOB.
DON'T TREAT ME LIKE I'M STUPID!

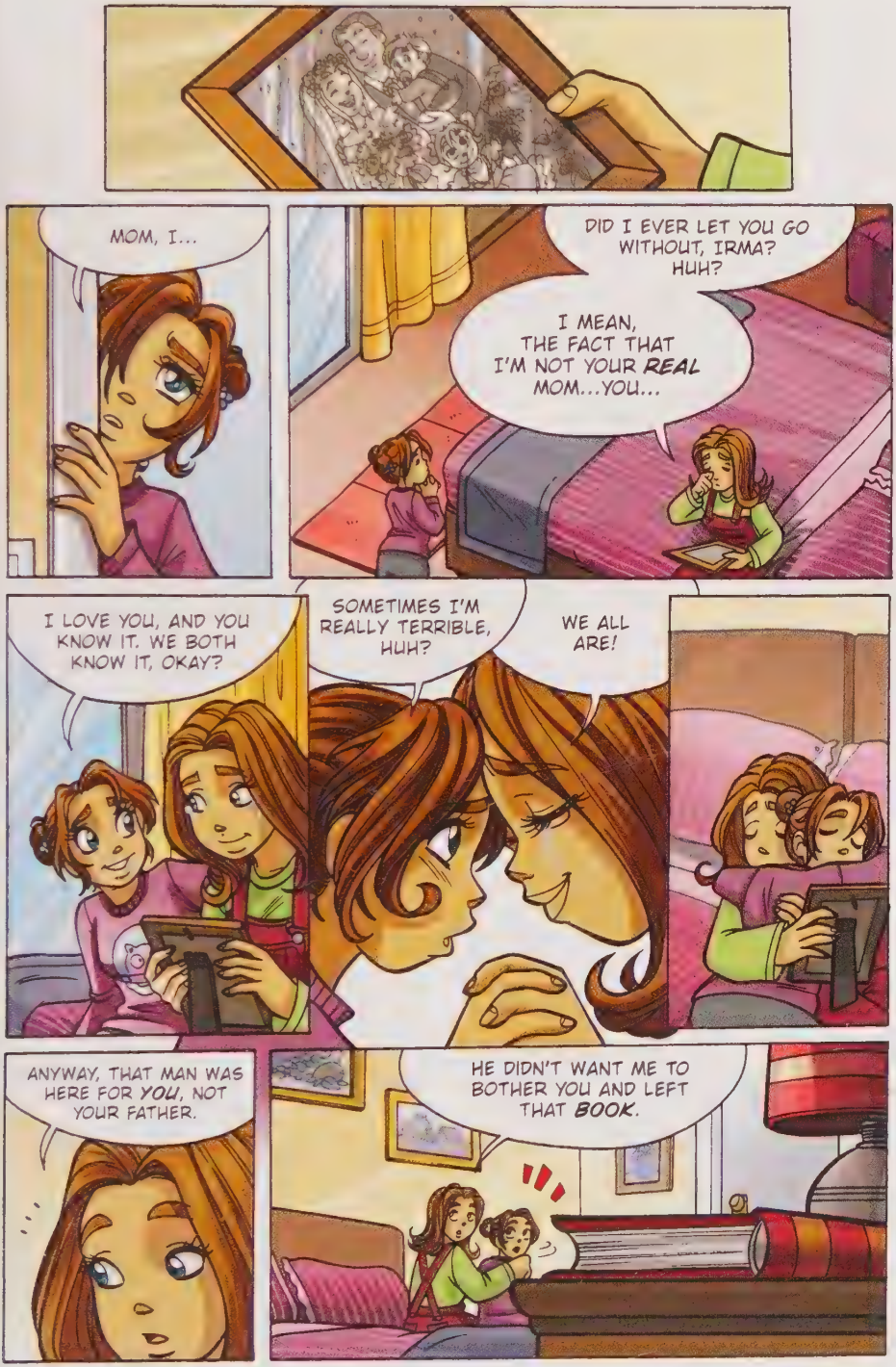
WHAT A GREAT JOB. YOU'D RATHER LISTEN TO WILL'S FATHER'S LIES, A MAN YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT!
HOW... HOW DARE YOU? WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY KNOW ABOUT THIS STUFF? YOU'RE JUST A CHILD!
CLUNK
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? SIT DOWN THIS INSTANT!
SIT...
DON'T YOU DARE!
DON'T EVER TRY TO STOP ME AGAIN. YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH I'VE CHANGED.
THE FIRE...

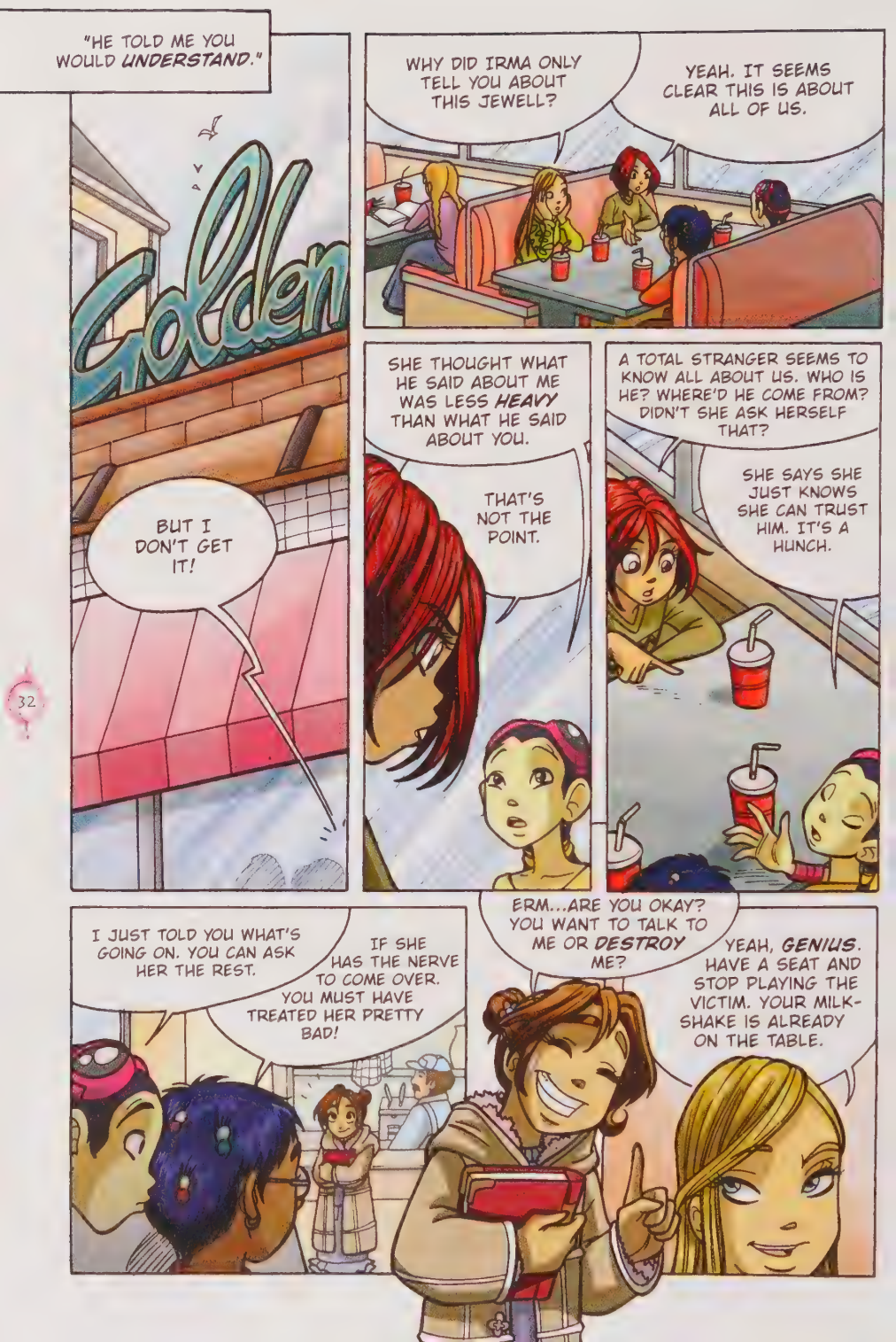
FOR AN INSTANT, IT FLARED WITHIN A CONFUSED DAUGHTER...
IN A SECOND, IT CONSUMED THE CERTAINTIES OF A MOTHER...
...BUT IT FIZZLED OUT FAST, AND A WISH WAS BORN FROM ITS ASHES!
NOW, IN THIS MOMENT, TARANEE WOULD LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN A SIGN FROM DESTINY...
...AND FATE SEEMS TO ANSWER TO HER!
NIGEL!


LAIR
DO YOU BELIEVE IN DESTINY, DAD?
I CAN'T AFFORD THAT LUXURY WITH MY JOB.
BUT WHAT IF YOU FOUND OUT IT EXISTS? THAT YOUR FUTURE IS ALREADY WRITTEN?
Heatherfield
THEN I'D TRY TO FIGURE OUT IF I CAN CHANGE IT OR REWRITE IT.
GOOD IDEA. MAYBE IT'S WRITTEN IN INVISIBLE INK OR...
...ON WATER!
HOW DEEP. I BET IT WAS THE PSYCHIC WHO GAVE YOU THOSE IDEAS.
DLIN DLON
DLIN DLON
I'LL GET IT.
I HEARD YOU TWO CHATTING IN THE BACK SEAT YESTERDAY.
WELL...UM... LET'S JUST SAY HE MADE ME THINK. BY THE WAY, DO YOU KNOW HOW HE'S DOING?
NO, HE DISAPPEARED. HE HASN'T BEEN BACK TO THE SHELTER.
TROUBLE IS THAT ZIBOSKY'S VANISHED AS WELL. WE LET HIM OUT ON BAIL.
Heatherfield


SO WE DON'T HAVE ANY WITNESSES FOR THE TRIAL AGAINST THAT CRIMINAL.
THEN, THAT POOR MAN MIGHT BE IN DANGER!
GET THIS. A MAN NAMED JEWELL CAME BY AND SAID...
?
?
HEY!
WAIT HERE. HE CAN'T BE FAR.
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHO WAS THAT GUY?
YOU SHOULD HAVE LET HIM IN. HE COULD HAVE IMPORTANT STUFF TO TELL DAD!


I'M NOT IN THE HABIT OF LETTING STRANGERS INTO MY HOUSE—OR BEING TOLD OFF BY YOU, UNDERSTOOD?
BUT HE WASN'T A STRANGER. HE WAS JEWELL...
WATCH YOUR TONE, MISSY. I DON'T LIKE YOU TALKING TO ME THAT WAY!
IT'S IMPORTANT! THAT MAN'S LIFE IS IN DANGER. WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
I SAID, DON'T TAKE THAT TONE WITH ME!
AND I'LL USE WHATEVER TONE I LIKE!
Oh man, I can't get anything right today.
MOM! MOM, WAIT. I'M SORRY!
NO DAUGHTER TALKS TO HER MOTHER LIKE THAT!
EXACTLY! NOT TO HER MOTHER!

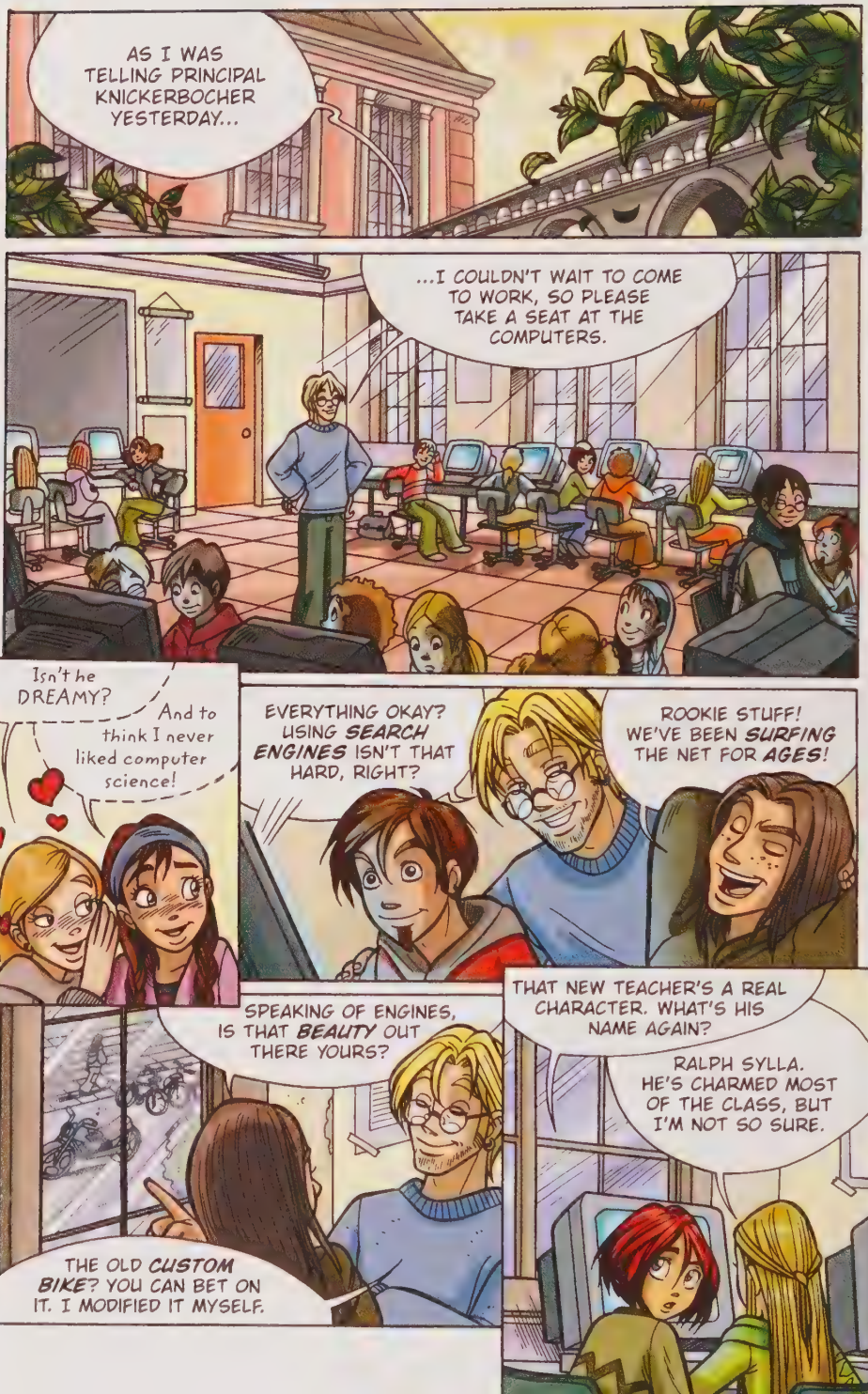

MOM, I...
DID I EVER LET YOU GO WITHOUT, IRMA? HUH?
I MEAN, THE FACT THAT I'M NOT YOUR REAL MOM...YOU...
I LOVE YOU, AND YOU KNOW IT. WE BOTH KNOW IT, OKAY?
SOMETIMES I'M REALLY TERRIBLE, HUH?
WE ALL ARE!
ANYWAY, THAT MAN WAS HERE FOR YOU, NOT YOUR FATHER.
HE DIDN'T WANT ME TO BOTHER YOU AND LEFT THAT BOOK.

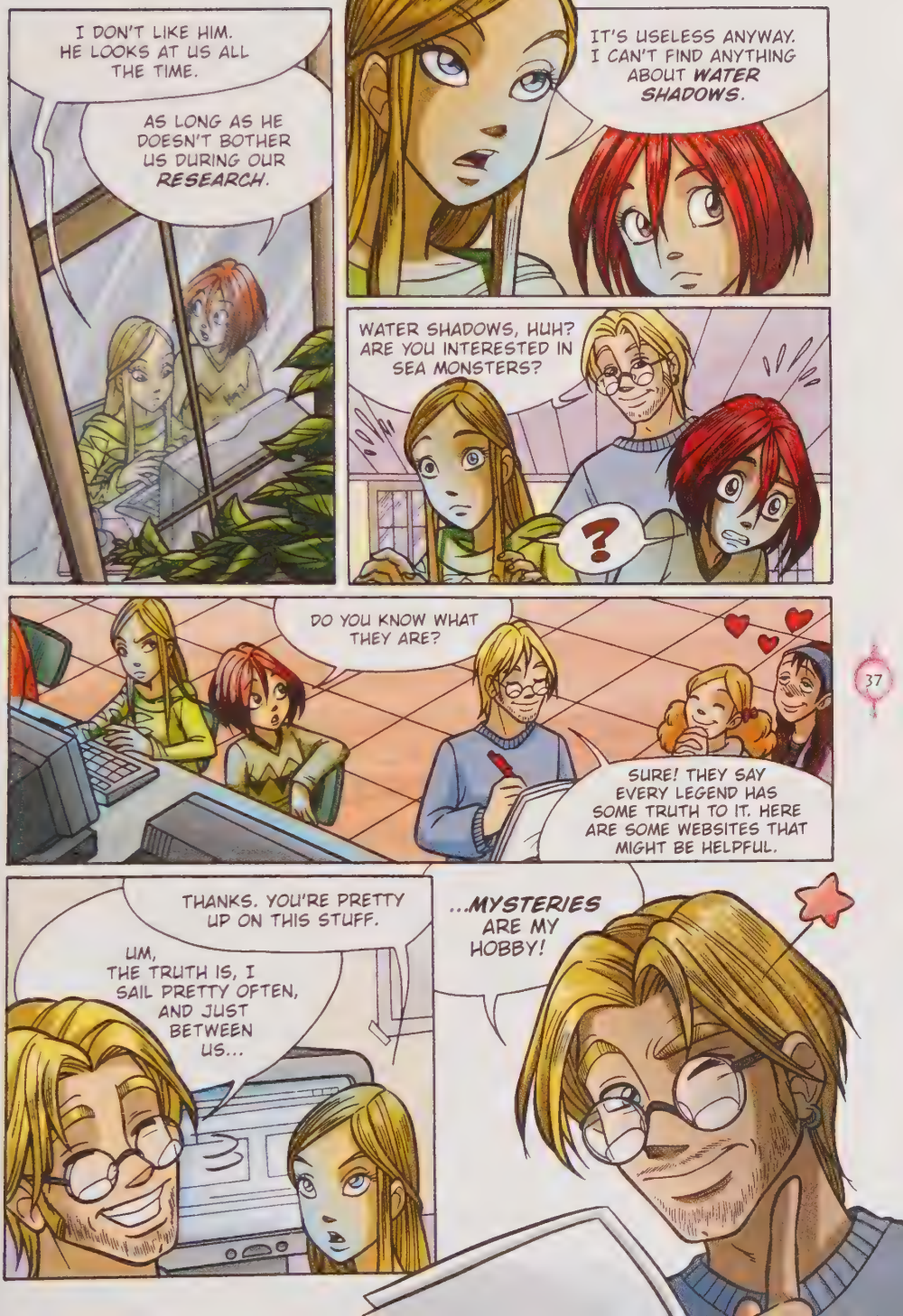

"HE TOLD ME YOU WOULD UNDERSTAND."
Golden
BUT I DON'T GET IT!
WHY DID IRMA ONLY TELL YOU ABOUT THIS JEWELL?
YEAH. IT SEEMS CLEAR THIS IS ABOUT ALL OF US.
SHE THOUGHT WHAT HE SAID ABOUT ME WAS LESS HEAVY THAN WHAT HE SAID ABOUT YOU.
THAT'S NOT THE POINT.
A TOTAL STRANGER SEEMS TO KNOW ALL ABOUT US. WHO IS HE? WHERE'D HE COME FROM? DIDN'T SHE ASK HERSELF THAT?
SHE SAYS SHE JUST KNOWS SHE CAN TRUST HIM. IT'S A HUNCH.
I JUST TOLD YOU WHAT'S GOING ON. YOU CAN ASK HER THE REST.
IF SHE HAS THE NERVE TO COME OVER. YOU MUST HAVE TREATED HER PRETTY BAD!
ERM...ARE YOU OKAY? YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME OR DESTROY ME?
YEAH, GENIUS. HAVE A SEAT AND STOP PLAYING THE VICTIM. YOUR MILK-SHAKE IS ALREADY ON THE TABLE.

BESIDES, I OWE YOU AN APOLOGY. I'VE STARTED SKATING AGAIN, YOU KNOW?
REALLY? THAT MEANS YOU FOLLOWED MY...
...WELL, HIS ADVICE!
SPEAKING OF THIS FRIEND OF YOURS... HAY LIN SAID YOU NEED TO SHOW US SOMETHING.
YEAH. LOOK AT THIS BOOK.
LOOKS PRETTY OLD.
IT IS. IT'S ABOUT SEA MONSTERS AND OTHER MYSTERIOUS CREATURES. CHECK THIS OUT.
WHY'S THAT PICTURE CIRCLED IN RED PEN?
JEWELL DID IT. HE WAS TRYING TO TELL ME SOMETHING.
THIS PARAGRAPH TALKS ABOUT MARINE CREATURES CALLED...
...WATER SHADOWS!

MEANWHILE, AT THE SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE...
TUMP TUMP
COME IN.
SORRY, MS. KNICKERBOCHER, BUT IF YOU DON'T NEED ANYTHING ELSE, I'LL BE OFF.
COME IN A MINUTE. I WANT TO INTRODUCE YOU TO SOMEONE.
THIS IS GIDEON, ONE OF OUR VALUED JANITORS.
NICE TO MEET YOU.
34
DEAR GIDEON, I'M PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT FROM TOMORROW, NOBODY WILL COMPLAIN ABOUT THE CHRONIC ABSENCE OF MR. BOTTLOM.
AH! SO WE HAVE A NEW COMPUTER SCIENCE TEACHER?
THAT'S RIGHT. MY NAME IS SYLLA, RALPH SYLLA, AND BELIEVE ME...
I CAN'T WAIT TO GET TO WORK!
A NEW FACE AT SHEFFIELD, EH...?

Witch
Will
Irma
Taranee
Cornelia
Hay Lin


AS I WAS TELLING PRINCIPAL KNICKERBOCHER YESTERDAY...
...I COULDN'T WAIT TO COME TO WORK, SO PLEASE TAKE A SEAT AT THE COMPUTERS.
Isn't he DREAMY?
And to think I never liked computer science!
EVERYTHING OKAY? USING SEARCH ENGINES ISN'T THAT HARD, RIGHT?
ROOKIE STUFF! WE'VE BEEN SURFING THE NET FOR AGES!
SPEAKING OF ENGINES, IS THAT BEAUTY OUT THERE YOURS?
THE OLD CUSTOM BIKE? YOU CAN BET ON IT. I MODIFIED IT MYSELF.
THAT NEW TEACHER'S A REAL CHARACTER. WHAT'S HIS NAME AGAIN?
RALPH SYLLA. HE'S CHARMED MOST OF THE CLASS, BUT I'M NOT SO SURE.

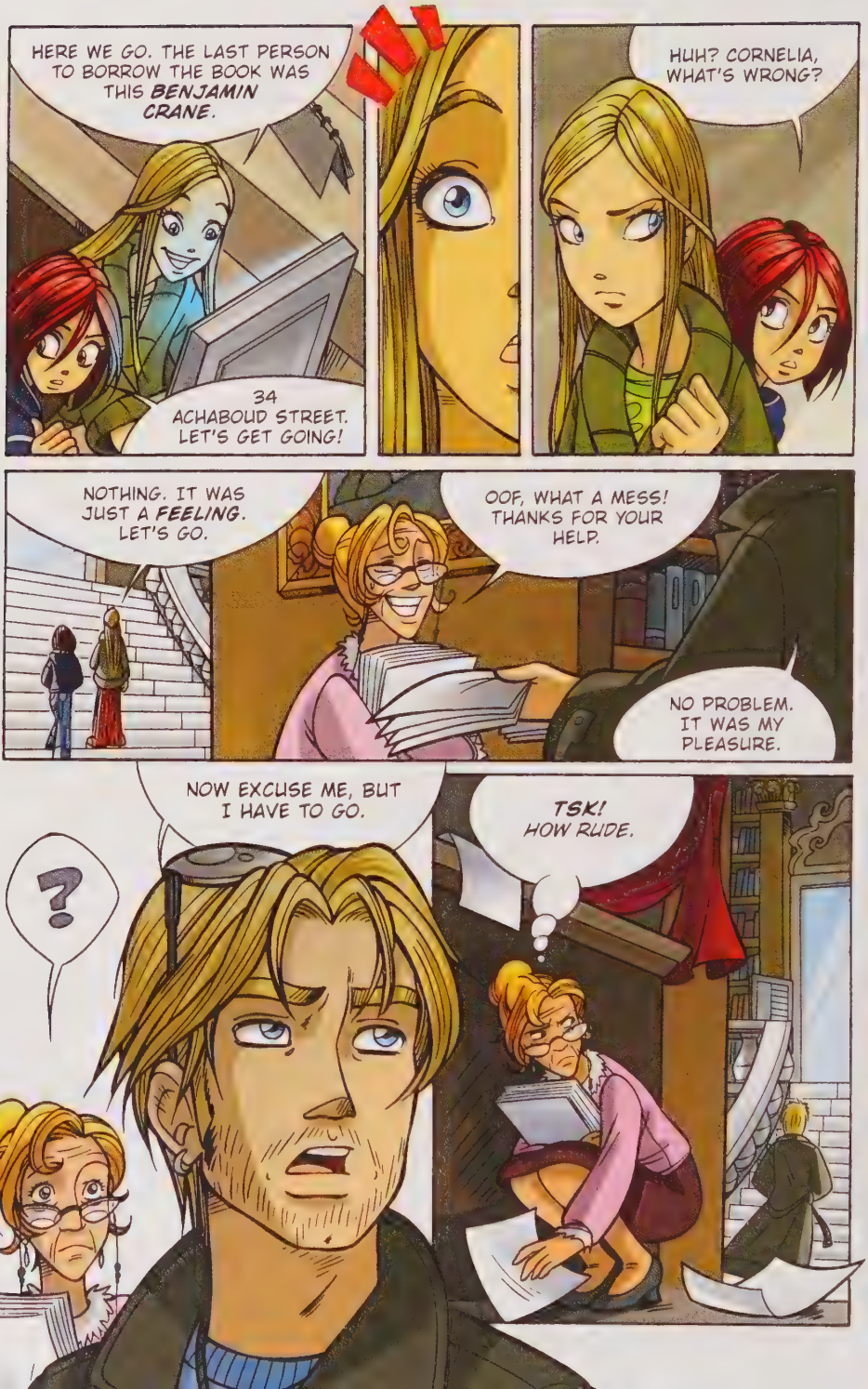

I DON'T LIKE HIM. HE LOOKS AT US ALL THE TIME.
AS LONG AS HE DOESN'T BOTHER US DURING OUR RESEARCH.
IT'S USELESS ANYWAY. I CAN'T FIND ANYTHING ABOUT WATER SHADOWS.
WATER SHADOWS, HUH? ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SEA MONSTERS?
?
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY ARE?
SURE! THEY SAY EVERY LEGEND HAS SOME TRUTH TO IT. HERE ARE SOME WEBSITES THAT MIGHT BE HELPFUL.
THANKS. YOU'RE PRETTY UP ON THIS STUFF.
UM, THE TRUTH IS, I SAIL PRETTY OFTEN, AND JUST BETWEEN US...
...MYSTERIES ARE MY HOBBY!

LATER, IN THE GARDEN OF THE SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE...
SO? DID YOU FIND ANYTHING?
NOT MUCH. JUST A FEW THINGS, NOT VERY INTERESTING.
WHEN TALKING ABOUT SHADOWS, IT USUALLY REFERS TO CREATURES WITH MAGICAL PROPERTIES...
...IN SOME WAYS AKIN TO ELEMENTAL SPIRITS. SO CREATURES TIED TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS, A BIT LIKE US. WATER, FIRE, EARTH, AND AIR.
THESE SPIRITS ARE MADE OF THEIR ELEMENT. FIRE ONES ARE MADE OF FIRE, AIR ONES ARE MADE OF AIR...
WAIT A MINUTE. ARE YOU SAYING THESE CREATURES HAVE NO BODY?
MORE OR LESS. WATER SHADOWS, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE ALMOST INVISIBLE TO THE NAKED EYE.
"BUT SOME SAILORS CLAIM TO HAVE SEEN THEM IN PODS OF DOLPHINS...
"SWIFT SHADOWS THAT LOOK ALMOST HUMAN..."

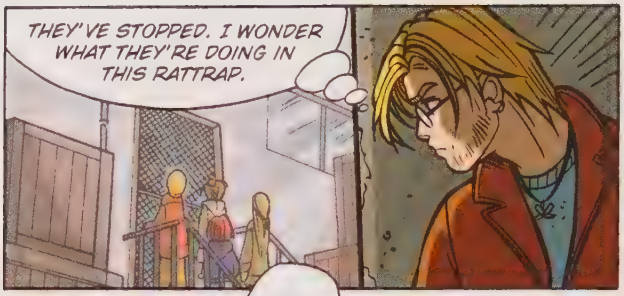
THEY SAY THIS IS WHERE STORIES ABOUT MERMAIDS CAME FROM.
CREATURES MADE OF WATER LIVING IN WATER? UNBELIEVABLE.
I'D SAY IMPOSSIBLE. WE'RE ON EARTH, NOT MERIDIAN.
WHY ARE YOU RULING OUT THE IDEA OF MAGICAL CREATURES LIVING HERE TOO?
BECAUSE I USE MY BRAIN WHEN I THINK, NOT MY IMAGINATION.
BUT WE EXIST, DON'T WE?
OH, COME ON. YOU TALK TO HER. I GIVE UP.
SO WHY DID JEWELL WANT TO BRING WATER SHADOWS TO YOUR ATTENTION?
MAYBE HE WANTED US TO FIND SOMETHING ELSE. LOOK WHAT'S BETWEEN THE PAGES OF HIS BOOK.
IT'S A LIBRARY TICKET.
FORGET ABOUT LEGENDS. FINALLY SOMETHING REAL WE CAN INVESTIGATE.

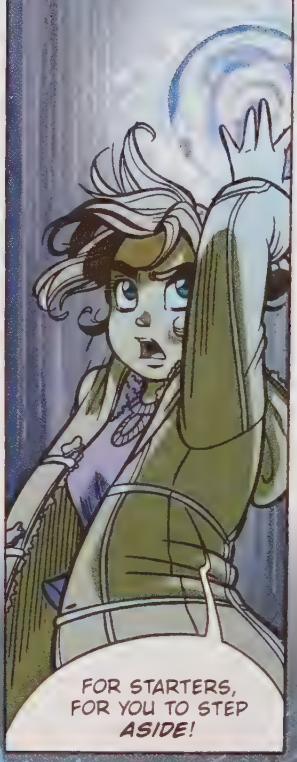
IF WE FIND WHOEVER REQUESTED THE BOOK, MAYBE WE'LL FIND JEWELL TOO.
AND HE'LL TELL US WHY HE KNOWS SO MUCH ABOUT US.
WAIT A MINUTE. WE'VE GOT TO FIND HIM 'COS HE'S IN DANGER! MARK ZIBOSKY IS LOOKING FOR HIM AND...
YEAH, YEAH, IRMA, WE KNOW HOW SERIOUS THINGS ARE.
"BUT IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT HE OWES US AN EXPLANATION."
40
I'M SORRY, BUT I CAN'T DIVULGE THAT INFORMATION.
YOU WERE VERY KIND TO RETURN THE BOOK, BUT I CAN'T GIVE YOU THE ADDRESS OF THE PERSON WHO BORROWED IT. IT'S AGAINST THE LAW...

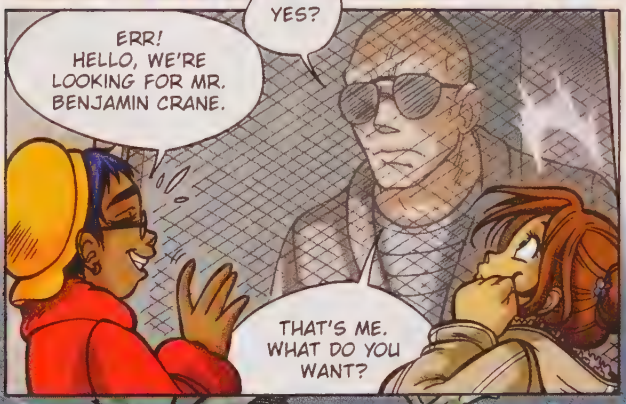
You're welcome, Miss YOGURT. Are all librarians so SOUR?
Haven't you noticed it smells STUFFY in here?
Maybe we should open the windows, huh?
SLAM
WOOOOOSH
OH! OOOH!
Hay Lin! That's not like you.
It's for a good cause. You said it yourself...Jewell might be in danger.

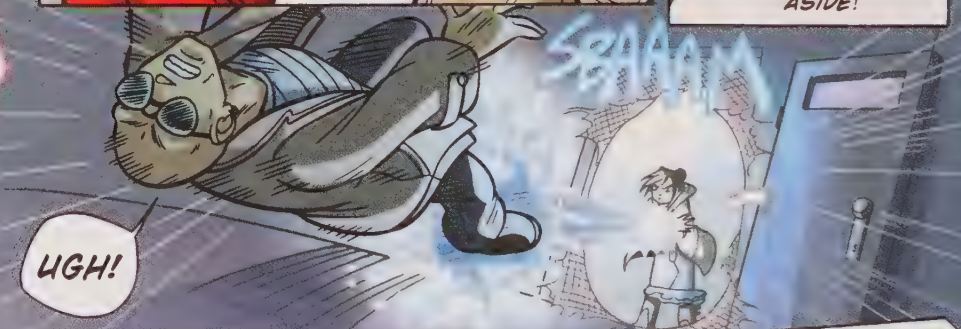

HERE WE GO. THE LAST PERSON TO BORROW THE BOOK WAS THIS BENJAMIN CRANE.
34 ACHABOUD STREET. LET'S GET GOING!
HUH? CORNELIA, WHAT'S WRONG?
NOTHING. IT WAS JUST A FEELING. LET'S GO.
OOF, WHAT A MESS! THANKS FOR YOUR HELP.
NO PROBLEM. IT WAS MY PLEASURE.
NOW EXCUSE ME, BUT I HAVE TO GO.
?
TSK! HOW RUDE.

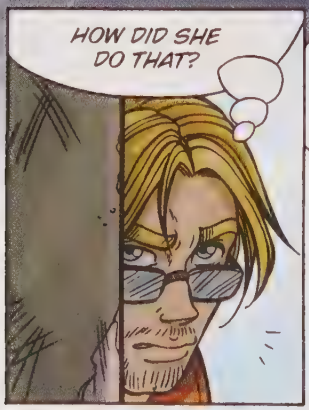
NOT EVERYWHERE IN HEATHERFIELD IS SUNNY AND REASSURING...
THE INDUSTRIAL PORT, FOR EXAMPLE, ISN'T A PRIME TOURIST SPOT.
LOOK AT THIS. IF MY PARENTS KNEW I WAS HERE NOW...
I'M SURPRISED THEY'VE NAMED STREETS AFTER PEOPLE AROUND HERE.
THEY'RE NOT GREAT NAMES...KRAKEN AVENUE, BOURBON ALLEY, AND...AH, HERE IT IS.
ACHABOUD STREET!
JUST GOES TO SHOW IT CAN ALWAYS GET WORSE.
NO BELL. SHOULD I KNOCK?
NO, HUFF AND PUFF. WITH THE STATE OF THIS DUMP, THE DOOR WILL PROBABLY FALL DOWN!

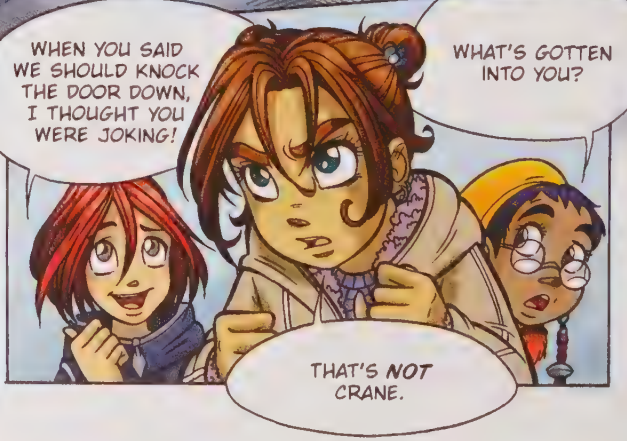

THEY'VE STOPPED. I WONDER WHAT THEY'RE DOING IN THIS RATTRAP.

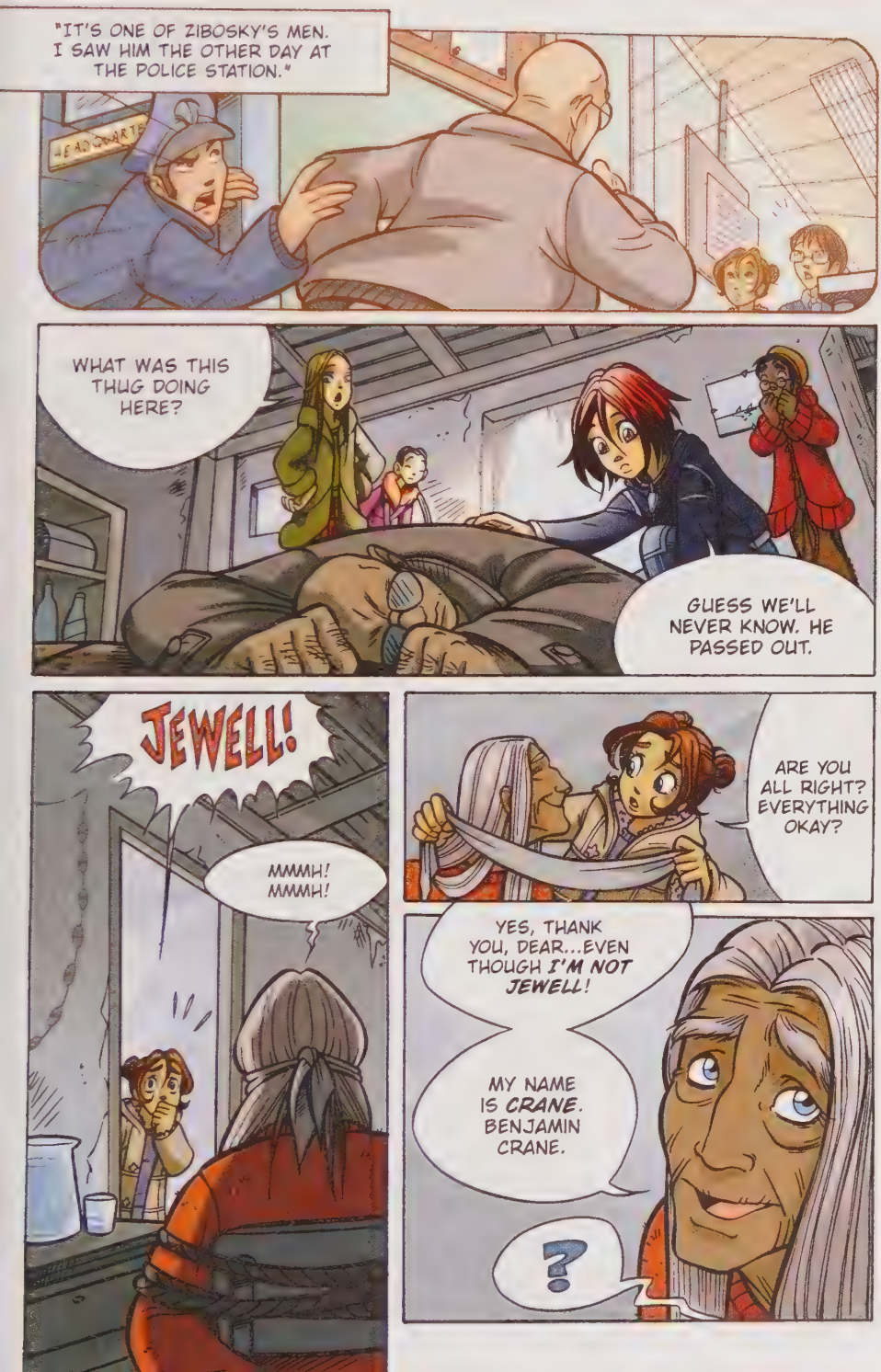

FOR STARTERS, FOR YOU TO STEP ASIDE!


YES?
ERR! HELLO, WE'RE LOOKING FOR MR. BENJAMIN CRANE.
THAT'S ME. WHAT DO YOU WANT?


SCHAAM
UGH!


HOW DID SHE DO THAT?


WHEN YOU SAID WE SHOULD KNOCK THE DOOR DOWN, I THOUGHT YOU WERE JOKING!
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?
THAT'S NOT CRANE.


"IT'S ONE OF ZIBOSKY'S MEN. I SAW HIM THE OTHER DAY AT THE POLICE STATION."
HEADQUARTERS
WHAT WAS THIS THUG DOING HERE?
GUESS WE'LL NEVER KNOW. HE PASSED OUT.
JEWELL!
MMMH! MMMH!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? EVERYTHING OKAY?
YES, THANK YOU, DEAR...EVEN THOUGH I'M NOT JEWELL!
MY NAME IS CRANE. BENJAMIN CRANE.
?

LATER, AFTER TAKING CARE OF THE SCOUNDREL...
I'M ACTUALLY A FISHERMAN. IT'S MY JOB—MY LIFE!
IT ALL STARTED ABOUT SIX MONTHS AGO. I WAS ON A FISHING TRIP, NOT HAVING MUCH LUCK, AROUND LIGHTHOUSE CAPE...
"THE WEATHER WAS LOUSY, AND THE BOAT WAS IN BAD SHAPE. BUT I NEEDED TO WORK.
"THE SEA STARTED GETTING ROUGH, AND SOON, I WAS TAKING ON WATER. I REMEMBER THE WATER WAS DARK, FREEZING, MERCILESS.

"I TRIED TO SWIM TOWARD THE COAST. THE BLINKING LIGHTHOUSE TOLD ME SAFETY WAS RIGHT THERE, WITHIN REACH...
"...BUT I'M NOT THAT YOUNG ANYMORE, AND THE CURRENTS ARE MEAN. I STARTED TO STRUGGLE.
"THEN SOMETHING *LIFTED ME UP!* A MASS OF BUBBLING WATER CARRIED ME TOWARD THE SHORE.
"AT FIRST, I THOUGHT IT MUST'VE BEEN A *DOLPHIN*. I COULD SEE SOME JUMPING NEARBY.
"WHEN I GOT TO THE ROCKS, I REALIZED I WAS TOO WEAK TO CLIMB UP.
"I FELT TWO *HANDS* GRAB ME AND CARRY ME TO SAFETY, AND THEN...
"...THEN I *SAW IT!*"

"THE LIGHTHOUSE ILLUMINATED AN EXTRAORDINARY BEING. A KIND OF SHADOW WITH A BLURRED SHAPE.
"THE IMAGE GOT SHARPER, AND THE CREATURE CLEARLY TOOK MY SHAPE!
"IT TOLD ME TO NOT BE AFRAID AND BROUGHT ME HERE, TO MY HOUSE."
48
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT...
A WATER SHADOW. YES. A MYTHICAL CREATURE!
AND TO THINK THAT UP UNTIL THAT POINT, I'D NEVER BELIEVED OLD SAILORS' STORIES.
THE SHADOW DIDN'T HAVE A NAME, YOU KNOW? WHEN I RECOVERED, I DECIDED TO CALL HIM JEWELL.

"THEN THE *PREDICTIONS* STARTED. JEWELL WOULD TELL ME THE AREAS WHERE I'D HAVE LUCK FISHING.

"AT FIRST, I BORROWED A BOAT. THEN BUSINESS STARTED GOING WELL, AND I BOUGHT A NEW ONE.

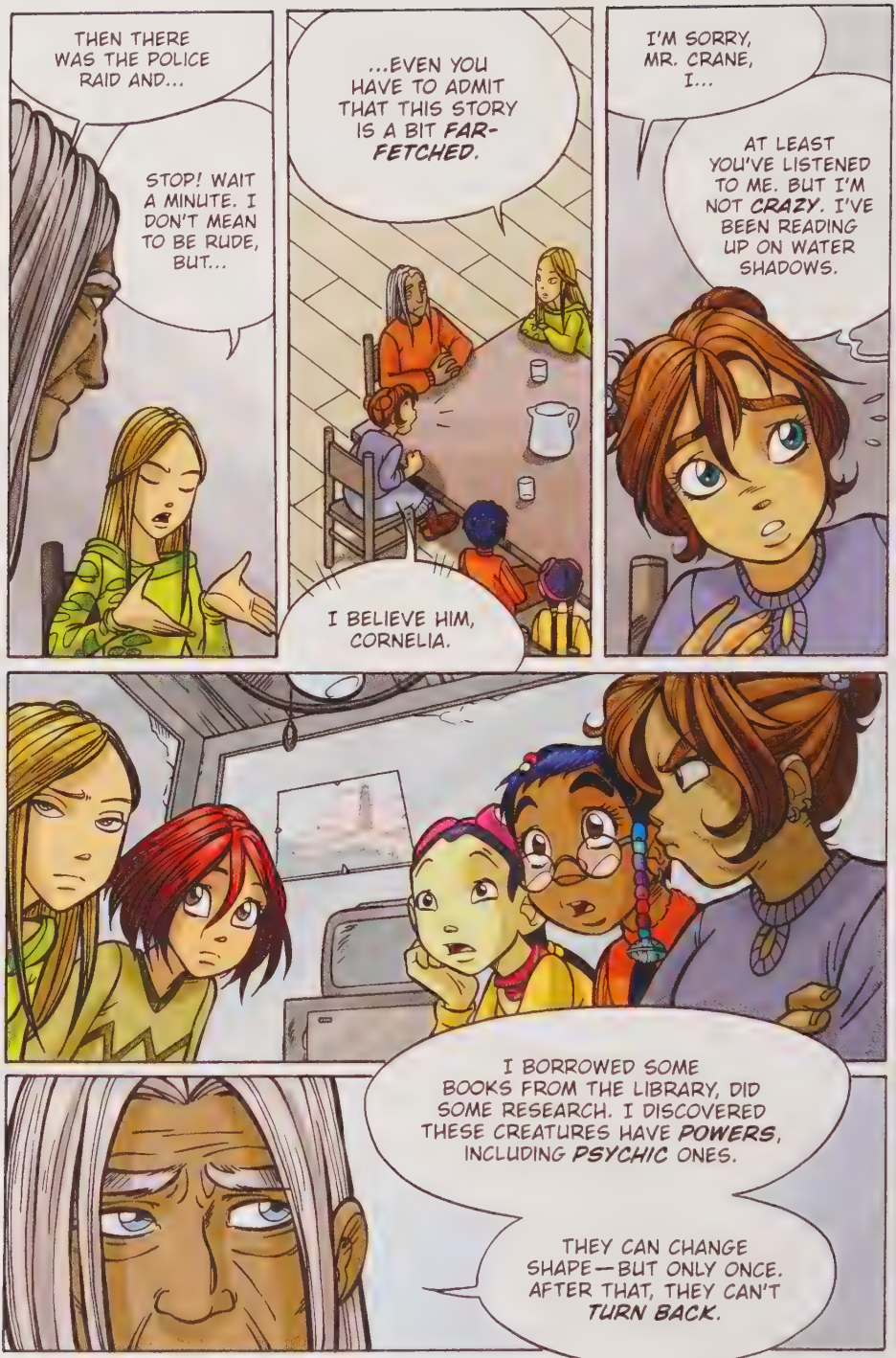
"JEWELL DIDN'T ASK FOR ANYTHING. HE JUST WANTED TO SEE ME HAPPY. HE WAS LIKE AN ANGEL COME FROM THE SEA.

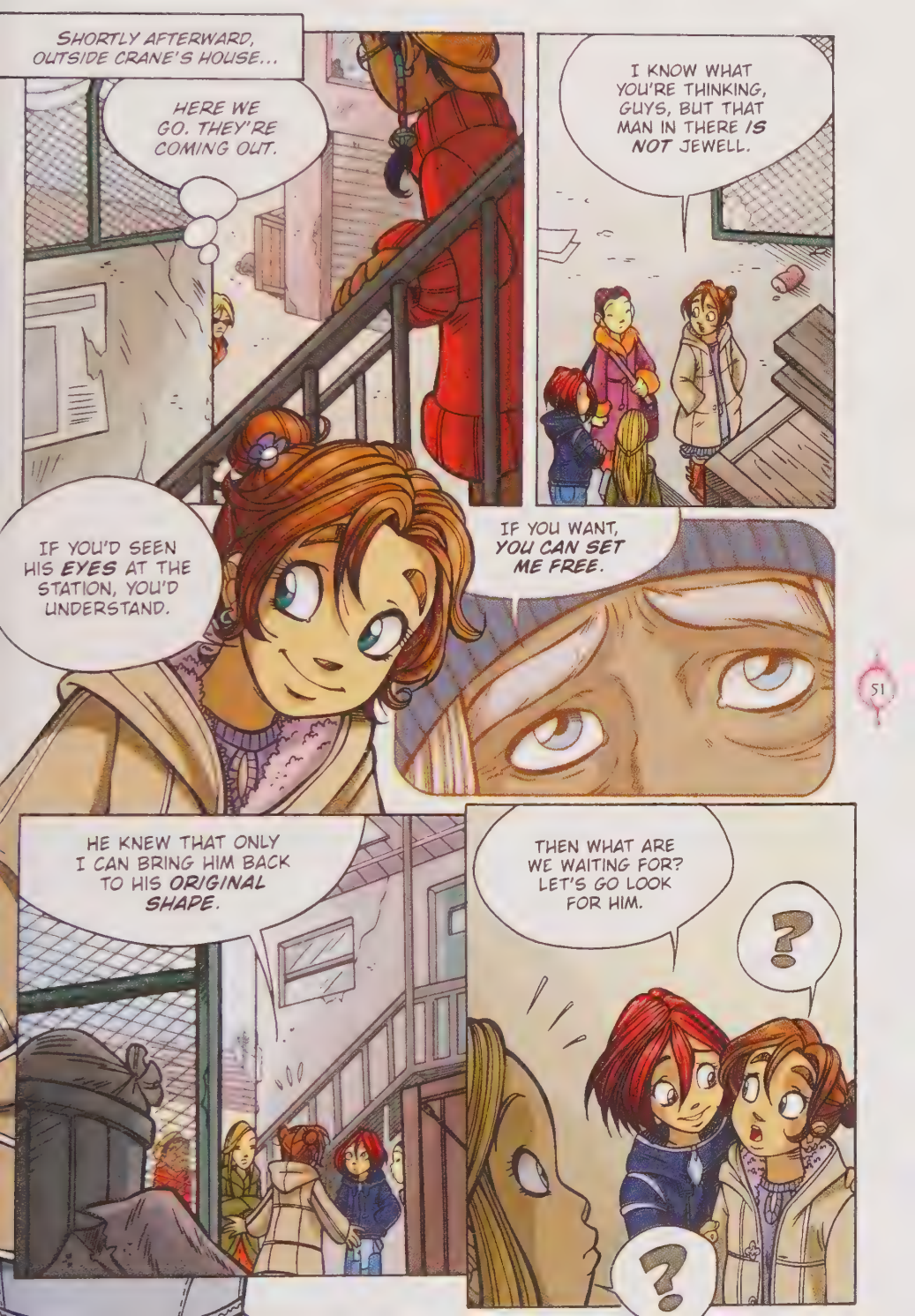
"UNFORTUNATELY, MARK ZIBOSKY NOTICED HOW WELL I WAS DOING AND DISCOVERED MY SECRET.

"HE THOUGHT JEWELL WAS MY BROTHER. HE TOOK ME HOSTAGE AND STARTED *BLACKMAILING* HIM.

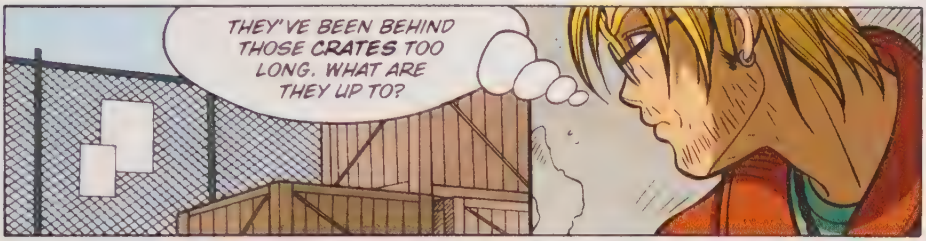
PREDICTIONS OF THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR LIFE.

HE USED JEWELL FOR HIS DIRTY DEEDS...ILLEGAL BETS AND OTHER RACKETS.


THEN THERE WAS THE POLICE RAID AND...
STOP! WAIT A MINUTE. I DON'T MEAN TO BE RUDE, BUT...
...EVEN YOU HAVE TO ADMIT THAT THIS STORY IS A BIT FAR-FETCHED.
I BELIEVE HIM, CORNELIA.
I'M SORRY, MR. CRANE, I...
AT LEAST YOU'VE LISTENED TO ME. BUT I'M NOT CRAZY. I'VE BEEN READING UP ON WATER SHADOWS.
I BORROWED SOME BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY, DID SOME RESEARCH. I DISCOVERED THESE CREATURES HAVE POWERS, INCLUDING PSYCHIC ONES.
THEY CAN CHANGE SHAPE—BUT ONLY ONCE. AFTER THAT, THEY CAN'T TURN BACK.


SHORTLY AFTERWARD, OUTSIDE CRANE'S HOUSE...
HERE WE GO. THEY'RE COMING OUT.
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, GUYS, BUT THAT MAN IN THERE IS NOT JEWELL.
IF YOU'D SEEN HIS EYES AT THE STATION, YOU'D UNDERSTAND.
IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN SET ME FREE.
HE KNEW THAT ONLY I CAN BRING HIM BACK TO HIS ORIGINAL SHAPE.
THEN WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? LET'S GO LOOK FOR HIM.
?
?

WAIT A MINUTE, WILL. EARLIER, YOU SEEMED AS SKEPTICAL AS I AM.
YEAH. WHAT MADE YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND?
I HAVEN'T SEEN HIS EYES, BUT I'VE SEEN YOURS!
IT WAS REALLY CLUMSY, BUT YOU TRIED TO HELP US ALL AND DID IT FROM THE HEART.
"CLUMSY," HUH?
SO I THINK IT'S THE HEART'S TURN TO RETURN THE FAVOR!
DID CRANE SAY WHERE WE MIGHT FIND JEWELL?
AT LIGHTHOUSE CAPE. SEEMS LIKE HE SPENDS WHOLE DAYS THERE.
THE PROBLEM IS THAT MARK ZIBOSKY KNOWS THAT TOO.
ALL THE MORE REASON TO TELEPORT. GET READY FOR TAKEOFF!


THEY'VE BEEN BEHIND THOSE CRATES TOO LONG. WHAT ARE THEY UP TO?

A LIGHT... WHAT...?

NO, THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! THEY DISAPPEARED!

IF THIS ISN'T A MYSTERY...

"...THEN MY NAME'S NOT RAPHAEL SYLLA!"
HEY, OLD MAN, COME OUT. WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE!

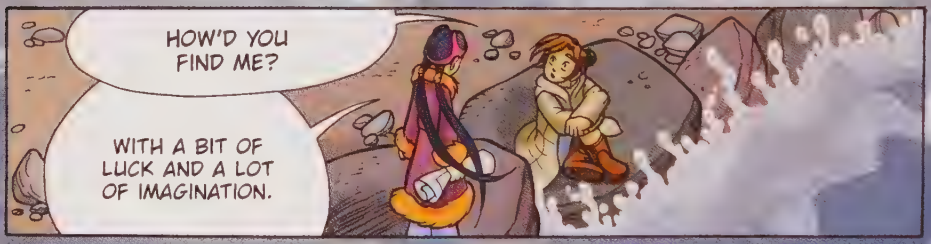
WE'RE NOT GONNA HURT YOU. YOU JUST HAVE TO TELL US WHAT THE POLICE ASKED YOU.
NOTHING, BOSS. THE DOOR'S LOCKED FROM THE INSIDE.
FINE. THEN LET'S DO IT THE HARD WAY!
SBRAAANG
UP THERE, ON THE STAIRS!
LET ME THROUGH. BEFORE I TURN HIM OVER TO YOUR TENDER CARE, I WANT TO HAVE A CHAT WITH HIM.
THERE YOU ARE! YOUR TWIN DIDN'T WANT TO TELL US WHERE TO FIND YOU.
BUT WE KNOW HOW TO MAKE PEOPLE TALK...
...AND WE ALSO KNOW HOW TO SHUT THEM UP!

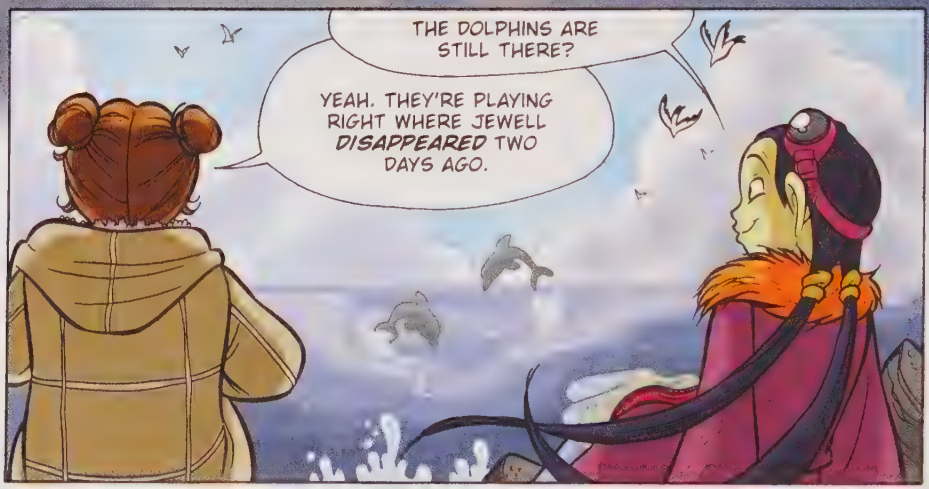
I ALWAYS THOUGHT BADDIES ONLY SAID THAT STUFF IN MOVIES!
?
WH-WHAT...?
HI, JEWELL. I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU!
ME TOO. I KNEW YOU'D COME.
S-STOP! D-DON'T COME ANY CLOSER!
RELAX, ZIBOSKY. YOU DON'T WANT TO GET ON MY NERVES, DO YOU?
MIKE! ORLANDO!
55
ARE YOU CALLING YOUR MINIONS?
SORRY. MY FRIENDS AND I ARE USED TO DEALING WITH FAR WORSE!

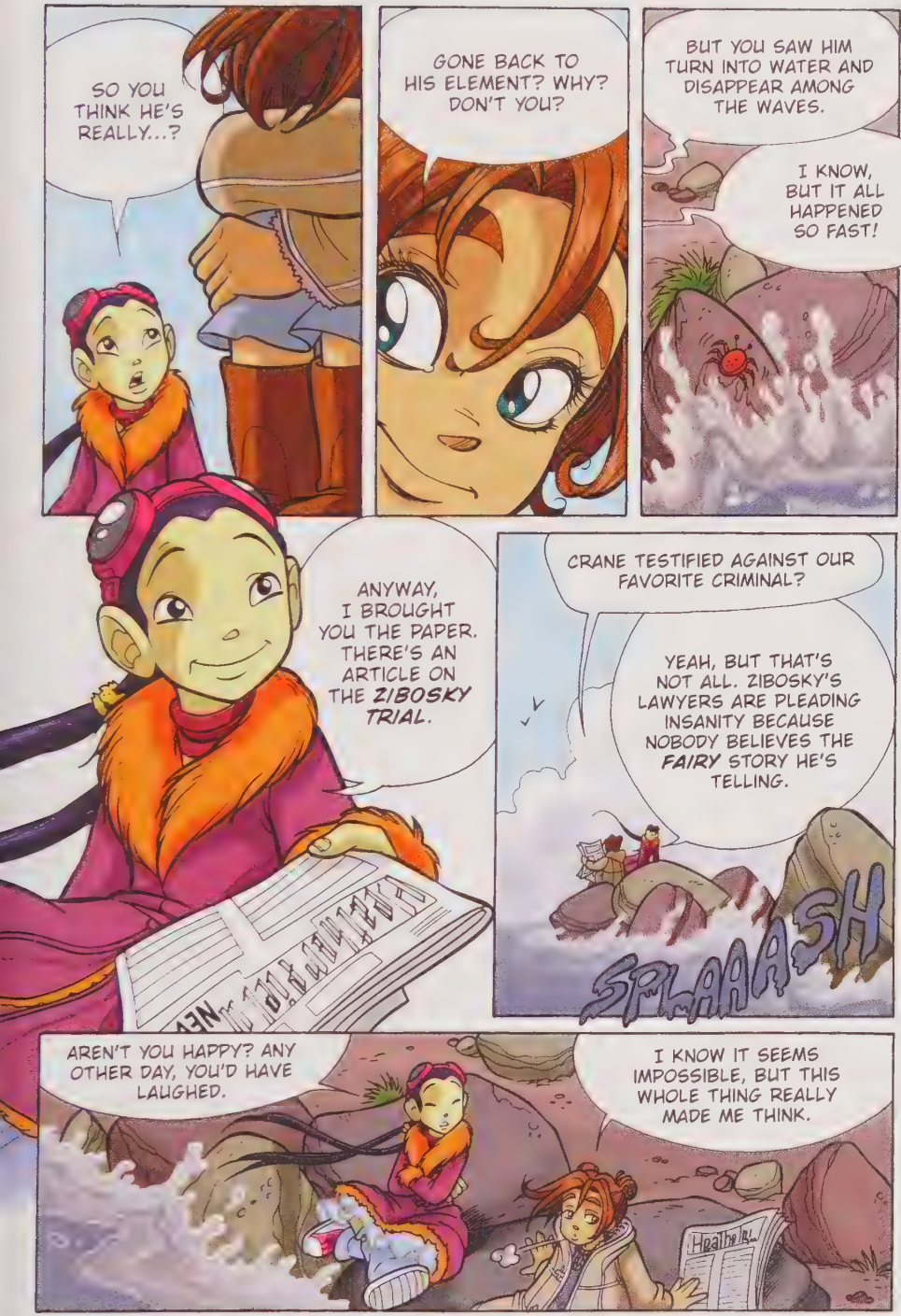
WH-WHO ARE YOU? WH-WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WE'RE THE GOOD FAIRIES, AND WE WANT YOU TO LEAVE JEWELL ALONE!
STAY AWAY! DON'T...
WATCH OUT!
JUST A SINGLE INSTANT... A MOMENT OF DISTRACTION.
SOMETIMES, IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH FOR THINGS TO FALL APART.

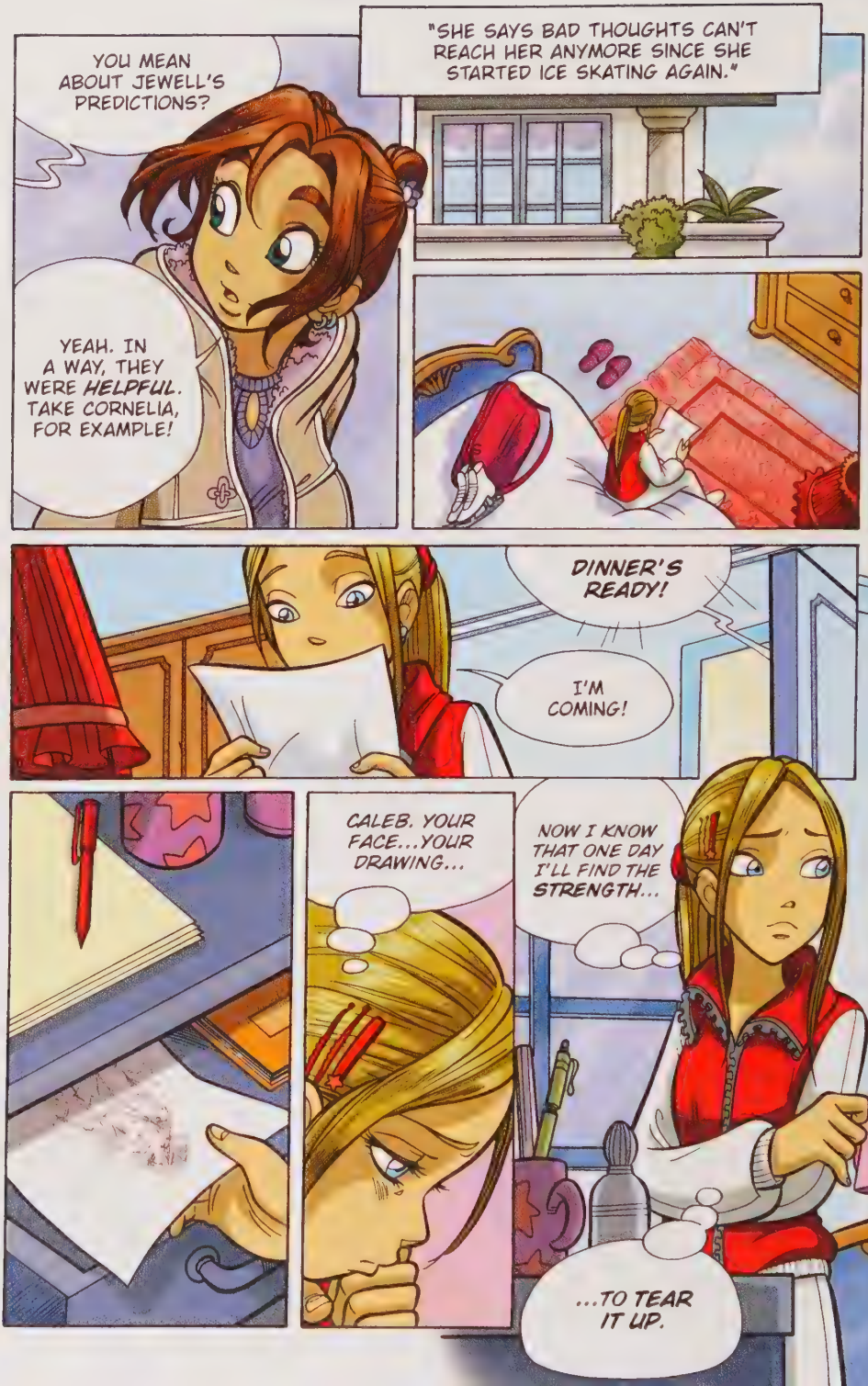
IRMA HOPES THAT IT'S TRUE, THAT JEWELL IS JUST A SHADOW PASSING BY...
...BECAUSE THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE HIM IS TO GIVE HIM BACK WHAT'S HIS.
AND TURN WATER...
...BACK INTO WATER.

SPLASH
SCIAFF
WOOOSH


HOW'D YOU FIND ME?
WITH A BIT OF LUCK AND A LOT OF IMAGINATION.

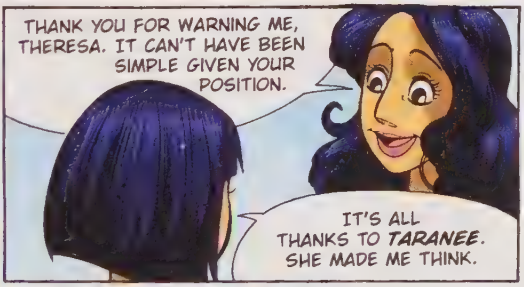

THE DOLPHINS ARE STILL THERE?
YEAH. THEY'RE PLAYING RIGHT WHERE JEWELL *DISAPPEARED* TWO DAYS AGO.

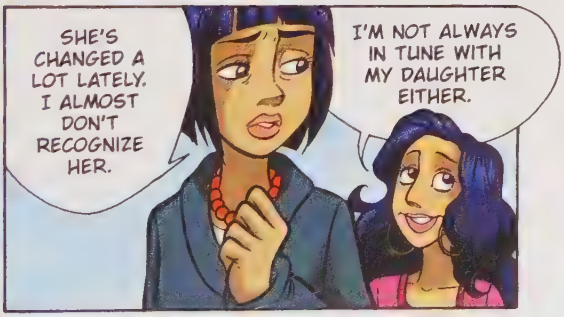

SO YOU THINK HE'S REALLY...?
GONE BACK TO HIS ELEMENT? WHY? DON'T YOU?
BUT YOU SAW HIM TURN INTO WATER AND DISAPPEAR AMONG THE WAVES.
I KNOW, BUT IT ALL HAPPENED SO FAST!
ANYWAY, I BROUGHT YOU THE PAPER. THERE'S AN ARTICLE ON THE ZIBOSKY TRIAL.
CRANE TESTIFIED AGAINST OUR FAVORITE CRIMINAL?
YEAH, BUT THAT'S NOT ALL. ZIBOSKY'S LAWYERS ARE PLEADING INSANITY BECAUSE NOBODY BELIEVES THE FAIRY STORY HE'S TELLING.
SPLAAASH
AREN'T YOU HAPPY? ANY OTHER DAY, YOU'D HAVE LAUGHED.
I KNOW IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT THIS WHOLE THING REALLY MADE ME THINK.


YOU MEAN ABOUT JEWELL'S PREDICTIONS?
YEAH. IN A WAY, THEY WERE HELPFUL. TAKE CORNELIA, FOR EXAMPLE!
"SHE SAYS BAD THOUGHTS CAN'T REACH HER ANYMORE SINCE SHE STARTED ICE SKATING AGAIN."
DINNER'S READY!
I'M COMING!
CALEB. YOUR FACE...YOUR DRAWING...
NOW I KNOW THAT ONE DAY I'LL FIND THE STRENGTH...
...TO TEAR IT UP.

TARANEE ADMITTED SHE HAS A SECRET AND SAID SHE KNOWS WHO SHE SHOULD TELL IT TO.
NO, TELLING WILL IS OUT OF THE QUESTION. SHE'S WAY TOO TOUCHY THESE DAYS.
THE FILE I SAW IN MY MOM'S OFFICE IS ABOUT HER MOTHER, SO SHE'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO AND...
?

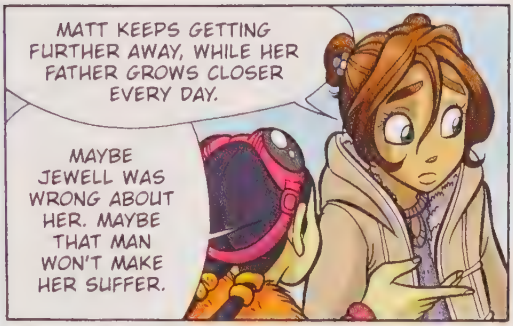
MOM! SHE'S TALKING TO SUSAN!

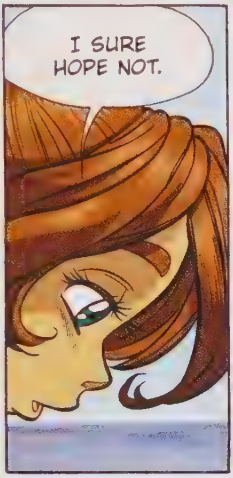

THANK YOU FOR WARNING ME, THERESA. IT CAN'T HAVE BEEN SIMPLE GIVEN YOUR POSITION.
IT'S ALL THANKS TO TARANEE. SHE MADE ME THINK.

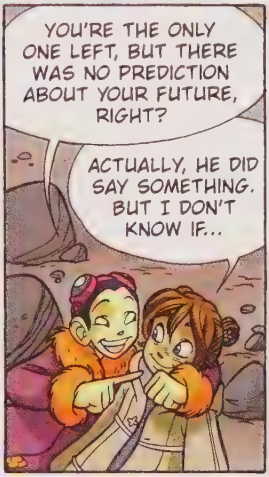

SHE'S CHANGED A LOT LATELY. I ALMOST DON'T RECOGNIZE HER.
I'M NOT ALWAYS IN TUNE WITH MY DAUGHTER EITHER.

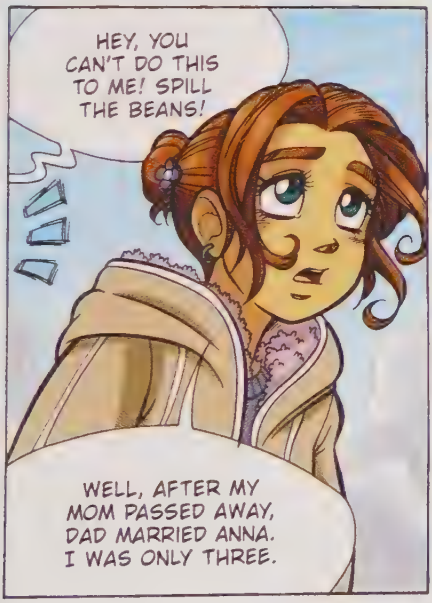
BUT STILL, I CAN'T IMAGINE MY LIFE WITHOUT HER.
YOUR HUSBAND IS SUING FOR CUSTODY OF WILL, THAT'S TRUE, BUT THERE'S NO GUARANTEE HE'LL WIN— ESPECIALLY SINCE I'LL BE THE JUDGE.
CLICK CLICK
CLICK CLICK CLICK
PUFFY
PUFFY WITH TOMATO!!
WILL VANDOM
"AND WILL? WHAT ABOUT HER?"

IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, SHE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO DIDN'T BELIEVE JEWELL.
I CAN'T BLAME HER.


MATT KEEPS GETTING FURTHER AWAY, WHILE HER FATHER GROWS CLOSER EVERY DAY.
MAYBE JEWELL WAS WRONG ABOUT HER. MAYBE THAT MAN WON'T MAKE HER SUFFER.


I SURE HOPE NOT.


YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE LEFT, BUT THERE WAS NO PREDICTION ABOUT YOUR FUTURE, RIGHT?
ACTUALLY, HE DID SAY SOMETHING. BUT I DON'T KNOW IF...


HEY, YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME! SPILL THE BEANS!
WELL, AFTER MY MOM PASSED AWAY, DAD MARRIED ANNA. I WAS ONLY THREE.

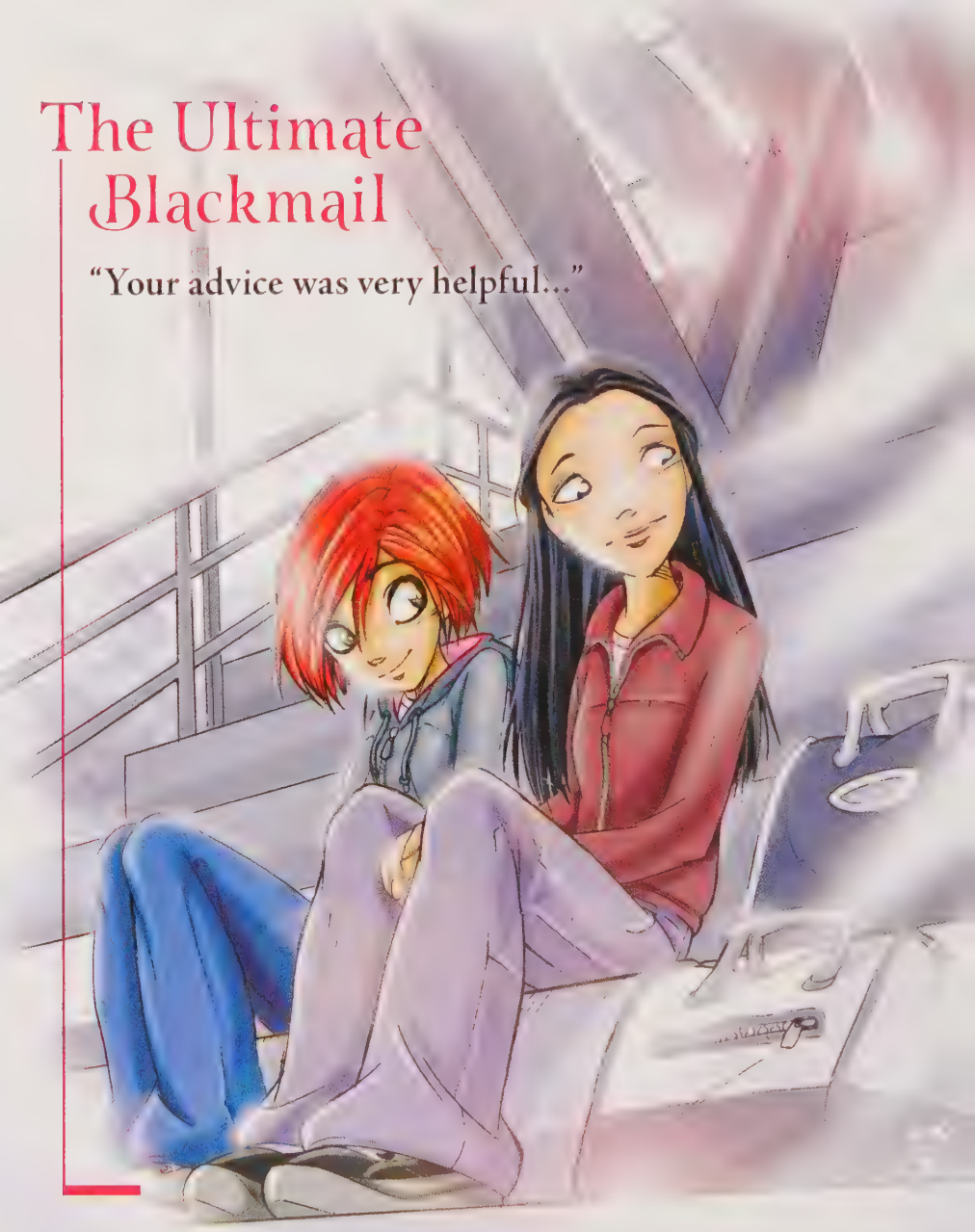
ANNA IS MY MOTHER. SHE'S THE BEST, BUT I...I...
I THINK I GET IT. GO ON.

YEAH, WELL... JEWELL SAID IT'S NOT EASY FOR ME TO REALLY BOND WITH PEOPLE.
NO, COME ON. HE DIDN'T SAY I'LL BE AN OLD MAID.
THAT'S NOT A PREDICTION. HE'S JINXING YOU!
ON THE CONTRARY. WHEN MY PRINCE SHOWS UP, HE PROMISED HE'D BE THE ONE TO TELL ME.
?!
DON'T MAKE THAT FACE. WHY DO YOU THINK I CAME HERE? I CAN STILL HEAR HIS VOICE.
BELIEVE ME, HAY LIN. IF YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES AND FOCUS, YOU CAN HEAR IT TOO.
"AND THE VOICE OF THE SEA!"
END OF CHAPTER 25

26

The Ultimate Blackmail

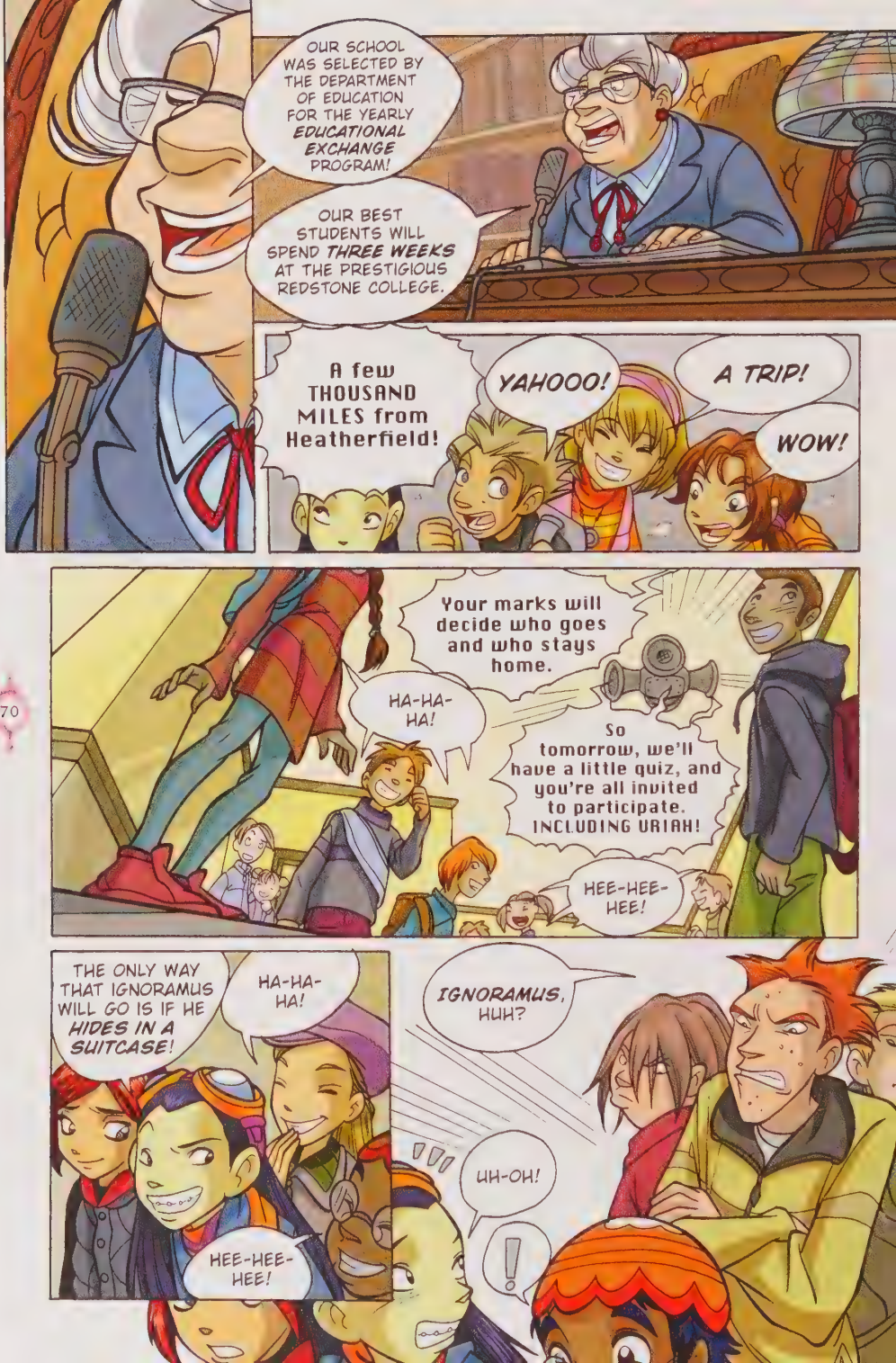
"Your advice was very helpful..."



Sheffield Institute
BEYOND THIS GATE, A NEW DAY OF SCHOOL IS ABOUT TO BEGIN...
FOR SOME, IT WILL BE GREAT, BUT FOR OTHERS THE HOURS WILL BE ENDLESS AS ALWAYS.
AND IF THE SECRET FOR A GOOD DAY IS TO START IT WELL...
MATT.
...FOR WILL VANDOM THIS WON'T BE A DAY TO REMEMBER.
HI, MATT!
!
DID YOU SEE? HE DIDN'T SAY HI...DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO PRETEND HE DIDN'T SEE ME.

THAT SHOULDN'T SURPRISE YOU AFTER THE WAY YOU TREATED HIM.
BUT I THOUGHT THAT HE AND MANDY...
WHAT YOU THINK DOESN'T MATTER. YOU SHOULD'VE CONFRONTED HIM.
KEEPING YOUR DOUBTS TO YOURSELF IS THE WORST THING YOU CAN DO. I SPEAK FROM EXPERIENCE.
IF SOMETHING'S WRONG, IT'S BEST TO GET IT OUT IN THE OPEN. IF YOU LIKE SOMEONE, TELL HIM! THAT'S WHAT I DO.
AND YOU DON'T HAVE ANYONE!
SUBTLE AS ALWAYS, MISS SENSITIVITY. ANYWAY, I DIDN'T SAY IT WORKS!
THAT'S NOT THE ISSUE, IRMA. I HAVE TO APOLOGIZE TO HIM.
ARE YOU CRAZY? NEVER APOLOGIZE TO A BOY.
NOT EVEN WHEN YOU'RE COMPLETELY IN THE WRONG?

I WAS WRONG ABOUT HIM AND MANDY. SHE'S JUST AN OLD FRIEND. SHE'S A COOL GIRL WHO'S GOING THROUGH A DIFFICULT TIME...
HER PARENTS ARE GETTING A DIVORCE. THAT'S AWFUL. AND I SHOULD KNOW!
BY THE WAY, HOW ARE THINGS SINCE YOUR DAD'S BACK?
NOT WELL AT ALL. MOM'S VERY NERVOUS. I DON'T THINK SHE'S TOLD ME EVERYTHING.
?
!
AWEEEEE-OOOO
WHAT'S THAT?
THE INSTITUTE'S NEW P.A. SYSTEM. AN IDEA I HAD THAT MS. KNICKERBOCHER WAS KIND ENOUGH TO IMPLEMENT.
Good morning, kids. This is your principal, and I have an important announcement!


OUR SCHOOL WAS SELECTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR THE YEARLY EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM!
OUR BEST STUDENTS WILL SPEND THREE WEEKS AT THE PRESTIGIOUS REDSTONE COLLEGE.
A few THOUSAND MILES from Heatherfield!
YAHOOO!
A TRIP!
WOW!
Your marks will decide who goes and who stays home.
HA-HA-HA!
So tomorrow, we'll have a little quiz, and you're all invited to participate. INCLUDING URIAH!
HEE-HEE-HEE!
THE ONLY WAY THAT IGNORAMUS WILL GO IS IF HE HIDES IN A SUITCASE!
HA-HA-HA!
HEE-HEE-HEE!
IGNORAMUS, HUH?
UH-OH!

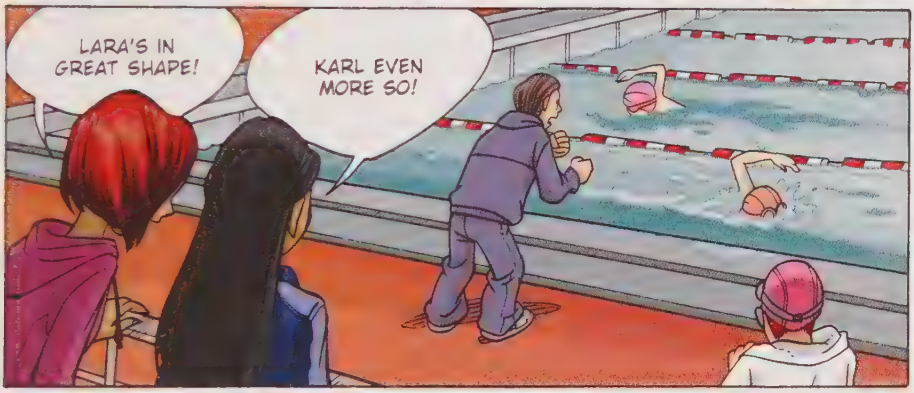
THE IDEA BEHIND THIS TRIP IS TO REWARD EFFORT AND FOCUS, ESSENTIAL QUALITIES IN SCHOOL...
...and in life!
PERFECT AUDIO! YOU CAN HEAR IT SO WELL! IT'S LIKE THE PRINCIPAL IS EVERYWHERE.
NOW YOU KNOW WHY WE NEVER STOP THANKING YOU, GIDEON.
To quote the immortal words of Mr. Folder, the school's first principal... Crrrrl...Krakkaa... Kreeee...
KRRRKKK KRRALLAA KRRREEEE? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
MAYBE MR. FOLDER WAS FROM ANOTHER PLANET.
SO IS MS. KNICKER-BOCHER FOR THAT MATTER!
WH-WHAT'S HAPPENING?
CRRKRRRR KKKK RKKKRRR
ZKKKZZZRRR
WAMP
CRRKKKK CRAK ZRAK
EEEEEK!

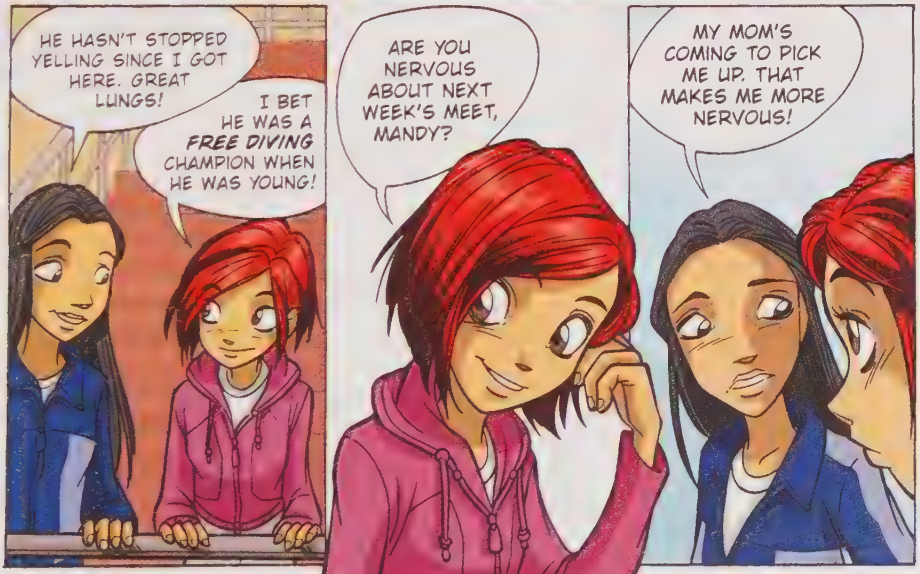
POW
WAMP
FLAK
POW
GIDEON! YOU ASSURED ME IT WOULD WORK PERFECTLY!
I'M REALLY SORRY.
AND WHAT ARE YOU STILL DOING HERE?
WAITING FOR MR. FOLDER'S IMMORTAL WORDS, MS. PRINCIPAL!
EVERYONE TO CLASS! THAT'S WHAT HE SAID.
UM...NOT EXACTLY GOING DOWN IN HISTORY!
TO CLAAAASS!
HA-HA-HA! SEE YOU LATER, GUYS.
LATERS!

ELSEWHERE, IN A RUN-DOWN HOTEL IN THE SLUMS...
TUMP TUMP TUMP
OH, IT'S YOU.
COME ON IN, HARVEY.
DID YOU SLEEP WELL, MR. VANDOM?
WONDERFULLY. AT LEAST UNTIL YOUR PHONE CALL WOKE ME UP.
I HAD EXCELLENT REASONS TO CALL.
I SURE HOPE SO.
YOU'LL THANK ME. HAVE A LOOK AT THESE.

WHO'S THE WOMAN TALKING TO SUSAN?
YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT, BUT...
...THERESA COOK—JUDGE COOK. SHE'LL BE PRESIDING OVER YOUR CUSTODY HEARING.
I WAS STAKING OUT YOUR WIFE'S HOUSE TO KEEP AN EYE ON HER, LIKE YOU ASKED ME, WHEN I SAW HER ARRIVE.
GREAT STUFF, HUH? AN IMPARTIAL JUDGE SHOULDN'T HANG OUT WITH THE DEFENDANT.
HMM...
RIGHT...
YOU HAVE JUDGE COOK IN YOUR POCKET, MR. VANDOM. YOU CAN THREATEN OR BLACKMAIL HER, IF YOU WANT.
SEE, HARVEY, THIS IS WHY PEOPLE LIKE YOU NEVER GET VERY FAR.
YOU'LL BE PLAIN OLD HARVEY LIMERICK YOUR WHOLE LIFE BECAUSE YOU DON'T GET IT. YOU LACK VISION.
WHAT'S THERE TO SEE?
THESE AREN'T TWO DEFENSELESS WOMEN. THEY'RE GETTING READY TO FIGHT.
HUH?

THEY'VE GOT SOMETHING IN MIND, AND IF WE DON'T GET THE UPPER HAND, WE'VE ALREADY LOST.
MY ALARM BELLS ARE RINGING, HARVEY.
"THAT'S WHY THE NEXT MOVE WILL BE MINE."
COME ON! ONE MORE LENGTH! ONE MORE LENGTH!


LARA'S IN GREAT SHAPE!
KARL EVEN MORE SO!


HE HASN'T STOPPED YELLING SINCE I GOT HERE. GREAT LUNGS!
I BET HE WAS A FREE DIVING CHAMPION WHEN HE WAS YOUNG!
ARE YOU NERVOUS ABOUT NEXT WEEK'S MEET, MANDY?
MY MOM'S COMING TO PICK ME UP. THAT MAKES ME MORE NERVOUS!

YOUR ADVICE WAS VERY HELPFUL. MOM DOESN'T MIND TOO MUCH IF I SEE MY DAD.
AND HE'S ALSO ACCEPTED HE'LL HAVE TO SPEND A BIT LESS TIME WITH ME.
WHAT MATTERS IS THAT YOU SPEND IT WELL. YOU CAN'T GET TIME BACK.
IF I HAD FOR-EVER, I COULD SPEND SO MUCH TIME WITH EVERYONE I LOVE.
IT WOULD BE AWESOME, BUT TIME'S ALWAYS AN ISSUE. JUST GOTTA DO THE BEST WE CAN.
SOMETIMES WE WASTE IT ON USELESS STUFF...WE FORGET WHAT REALLY MATTERS...
...AND NEVER REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT SOMEONE IS UNTIL THEY'RE GONE.
ARE YOU SPEAKING IN GENERAL...
...OR ABOUT MATT?

OH, DON'T MISUNDERSTAND ME. I...I...
YOU'RE OVERCOMPLICATING THINGS, WILL.
YOU LIKE MATT, DON'T YOU?
NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT, AND I GET IT. I'VE KNOWN MATT FOREVER, AND I KNOW WHAT HE'S WORTH.
I'M SO ASHAMED OF THE WAY I TREATED HIM.
BUT NOW I'D LIKE TO CLEAR THINGS UP. I THOUGHT YOU TWO... I MEAN, I WANT TO EXPLAIN, BUT HE'S AVOIDING ME.
WELL, I CARE ABOUT HIM A LOT.
HE'S A BIT TOUCHY, THAT'S TRUE, BUT HE'LL GET OVER IT.
GIVE HIM TIME, WILL. YOU'LL SEE. SOON HE'LL THAW OUT.
BUT I CAN'T WAIT.
SEEING HIM AT SCHOOL IN THE MORNING IS TORTURE. IT'S AWFUL, LIKE I DON'T EVEN EXIST. WHAT CAN I DO?
DO YOU WANT MY HONEST ADVICE?

POOT POOT POOOT
?
?
HOP IN, WILL! I'LL GIVE YOU A LIFT HOME.
DAD!
GO ON. I'LL GIVE YOU A CALL.
UH, OKAY, MANDY.
RAINING CATS AND DOGS, HUH? I THOUGHT IT WAS GOING TO STAY DRY, BUT IT STARTED POURING!
YOU GOT HERE RIGHT ON TIME!
I THOUGHT A FREEZING SHOWER MIGHT BE TOO MUCH AFTER AN AFTERNOON OF SWIMMING.
LIKE THEY SAY, THE LAST DROP MAKES THE CUP OVERFLOW.
WHAT IF I'D CAUGHT A COLD?
A RIDDLE? THIS ONE'S EASY!
THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE DROP THAT MADE THE NOSE OVERFLOW, RIGHT?
HA-HA-HA! THAT'S RIGHT!

SO THERE'S STILL SOMEONE IN THE VANDOM FAMILY WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR.
HUH?
YOU'RE SO DIFFERENT FROM YOUR MISERY OF A MOTHER.
MOM IS NOT A MISERY!
OH YES SHE IS. YOU SAW HOW SHE WELCOMED ME. SHE WASN'T EXACTLY JUMPING FOR JOY.
AND THE SITUATION MIGHT GET WORSE SOON.
WHY'S THAT?
WELL, I WAS THINKING WE COULD SPEND YOUR MIDTERM VACATION TOGETHER.
THAT'S GREAT! WE HAVEN'T HAD A HOLIDAY TOGETHER IN AGES. MOM WILL BE THRILLED.
I WASN'T THINKING OF INVITING HER ALONG. I PICTURED JUST YOU AND ME, ALONE FOR A WHOLE WEEK.
IN ANY BEAUTIFUL PLACE YOU WANT AWAY FROM THIS CITY. WHAT DO YOU SAY?
I...I DON'T KNOW.

YOU'LL HAVE TO PICK SIDES SOON, WILL.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU KNOW THAT QUESTION KIDS GET ASKED?
"WHO DO YOU LOVE MORE, MOM OR DAD?"
IT'S A STUPID QUESTION! HOW CAN YOU PICK ONE?
IT MAY BE STUPID, BUT SOMEONE MIGHT ASK YOU SOONER OR LATER.
THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO GIVE AN ANSWER, WILL.
I DON'T LIKE THIS. WHY ARE YOU TALKING LIKE THIS?
HEY, DON'T GET MAD. IT WAS JUST A JOKE.
NO IT WASN'T!
STOP! I'M GETTING OUT HERE.
WE'RE NOT THERE YET! YOU'LL GET SOAKED.

WILL!
WILL!
DAD HAS NO INTENTION OF GETTING BACK WITH MOM.
THEN WHY DID HE COME TO HEATHERFIELD?
WHAT DOES HE WANT FROM US?
"AND WHAT DOES HE WANT FROM ME?"

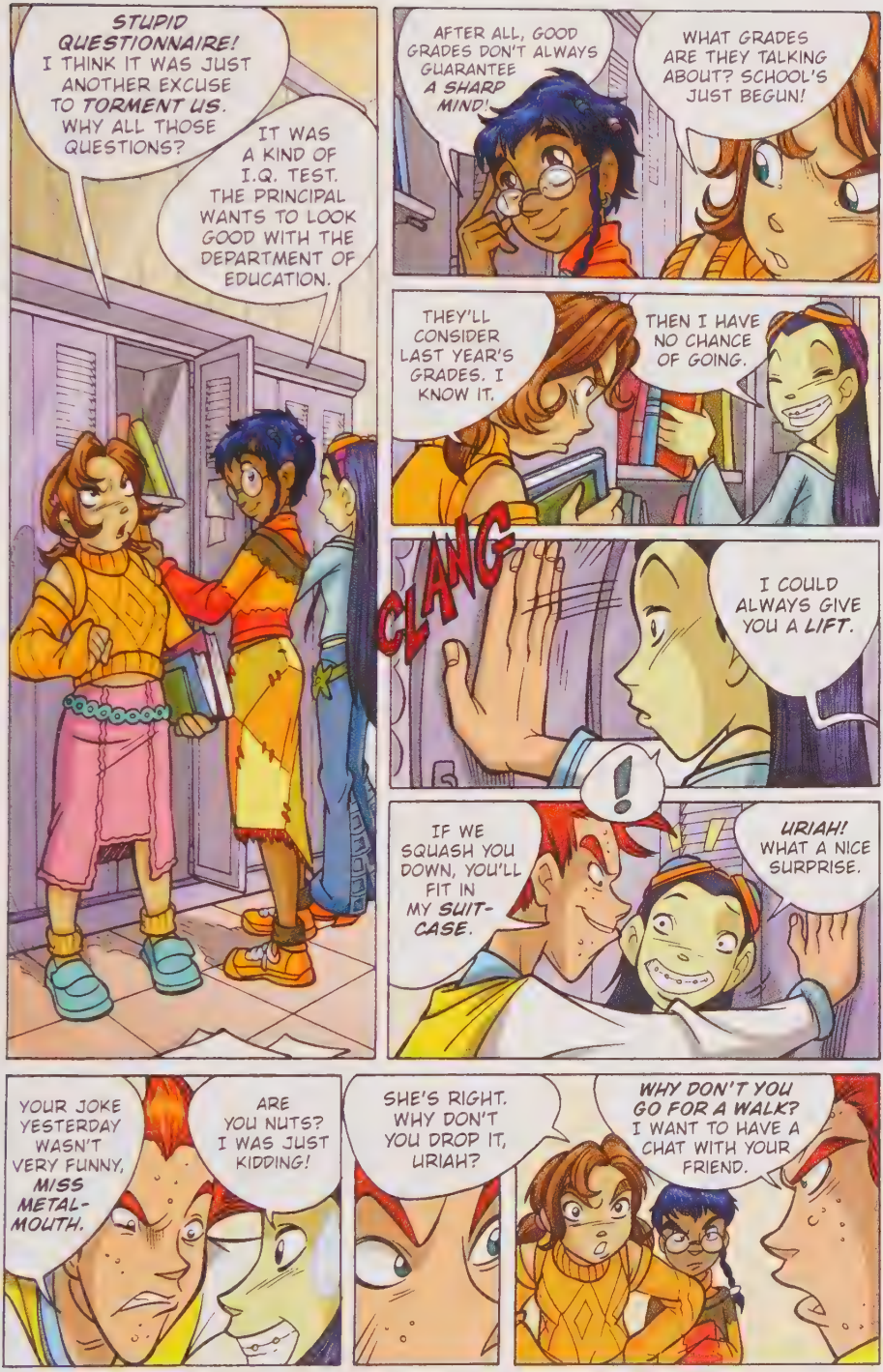
WILL!
HI, MOM.
GOOD GRIEF, WHAT HAPPENED? YOU'RE DRIPPING WET!
IT'S ALL RIGHT. DAD GAVE ME A LIFT.
IN WHAT, A CANOE?
WE TALKED A LITTLE AND...
DID HE TELL YOU ABOUT THIS TOO?
IT'S A LETTER FROM THE COURT!
IT ARRIVED THIS MORNING. THEY WANT TO INTERVIEW ME ABOUT YOU AND YOUR CUSTODY HEARING.
C-CUSTODY?
YOU FATHER WANTS TO KEEP YOU WITH HIM, WILL. HE WANTS TO TAKE YOU AWAY FROM ME! THAT'S THE WONDERFUL MAN COMING BACK TO BE WITH HIS FAMILY.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS. I DON'T *WANT* TO! WHY WOULD HE DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
YOU SHOULD ASK HIM.
I KNEW HE WAS PLOTTING SOMETHING WHEN HE REFUSED TO SIGN OUR DIVORCE PAPERS.
ALL HIS PRESENTS, HIS ATTENTION... HE TRICKED ME...USED ME TO HURT YOU.
COME HERE, WILL.
MY DARLING.
OH, MOM!
I HOPED WE COULD ALL LIVE TOGETHER.
IF THAT'S WHAT HE TOLD YOU, HE LIED TO YOU, WILL.
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO?
THERE'S STILL TIME. MY LAWYER WILL TAKE CARE OF IT, AND I'LL *FIGHT* THOMAS IN COURT.

I'M NOT GOING TO LOSE YOU, WILL. I PROMISE.

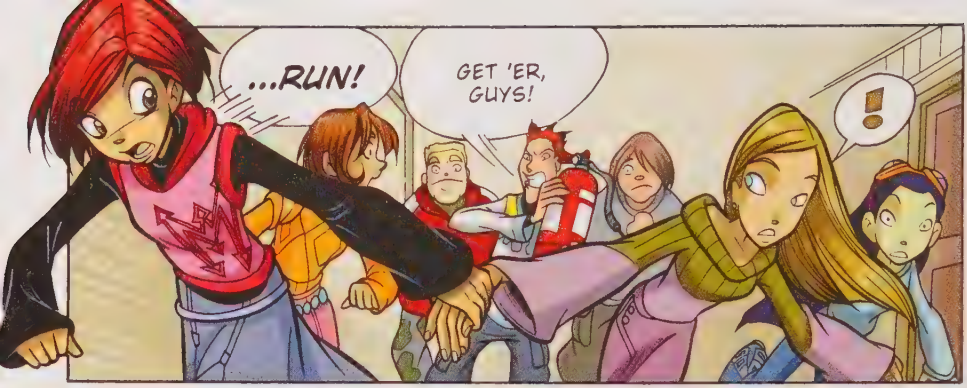
THE NEXT DAY...
RELAX, IT'S JUST A QUESTIONNAIRE. ALL YOUR FRIENDS ARE FILLING IT OUT.
IT'S A PSYCHOMETRIC TEST TO GET TO KNOW YOU BETTER AND EVALUATE YOU WITH MORE PRECISION.
IT WILL ALLOW US TO PICK THE STUDENTS BEST SUITED FOR SHEFFIELD'S EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE.
YOU HAVE ONE HOUR TO FINISH, AND NO CHEATING. THAT WOULD BE POINTLESS.
SO HEADS DOWN AND GOOD LUCK!
Why aren't you writing, Will?
I was thinking about my father. I thought he was different.
What did your mom say?
She tried to reassure me, but I didn't sleep a wink all night.

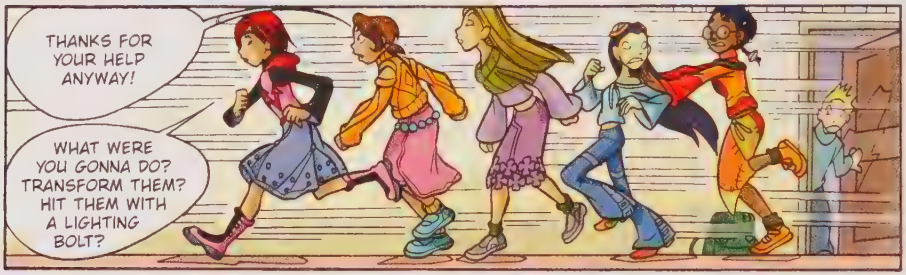
"I KNOW SHE'S GONNA DO SOMETHING. I JUST HOPE SHE WON'T REGRET IT."
BREEEEEP BREEEEEP BREEEEEEP
HUH?
HELLO?
Hi, Thomas.
I'D LIKE US TO SPEAK FACE-TO-FACE, WITHOUT INVOLVING WILL OR ANYONE ELSE. WHAT DO YOU SAY?
Wonderful, Susan.
I CAN'T WAIT. WE HAVE A LOT TO TALK ABOUT. SHALL WE MEET UP LATER?
I want to see you NOW. Say, half an hour. You know the way to my house.
I DO, SUSAN, AND I KNOW YOU TOO!
DRIIIING
TIME'S UP, GUYS!
HAND IN YOUR PAPERS AND GET OUT.
BYE-BYE!
SEE YOU TOMORROW, MR. HORSE-BERG.


STUPID QUESTIONNAIRE! I THINK IT WAS JUST ANOTHER EXCUSE TO TORMENT US. WHY ALL THOSE QUESTIONS?
IT WAS A KIND OF I.Q. TEST. THE PRINCIPAL WANTS TO LOOK GOOD WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.
AFTER ALL, GOOD GRADES DON'T ALWAYS GUARANTEE A SHARP MIND!
WHAT GRADES ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT? SCHOOL'S JUST BEGUN!
THEY'LL CONSIDER LAST YEAR'S GRADES. I KNOW IT.
THEN I HAVE NO CHANCE OF GOING.
CLANG
I COULD ALWAYS GIVE YOU A LIFT.
IF WE SQUASH YOU DOWN, YOU'LL FIT IN MY SUIT-CASE.
URIAH! WHAT A NICE SURPRISE.
YOUR JOKE YESTERDAY WASN'T VERY FUNNY, MISS METAL-MOUTH.
ARE YOU NUTS? I WAS JUST KIDDING!
SHE'S RIGHT. WHY DON'T YOU DROP IT, URIAH?
WHY DON'T YOU GO FOR A WALK? I WANT TO HAVE A CHAT WITH YOUR FRIEND.

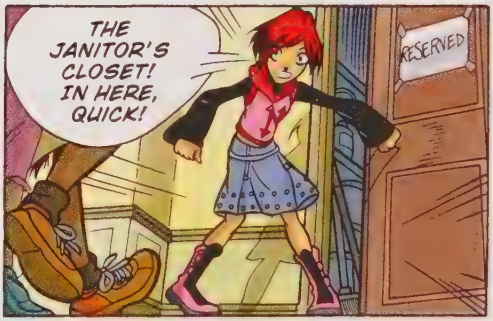
I WANT YOU TO APOLOGIZE FOR WHAT YOU CALLED ME, METAL-MOUTH.
I HAVE TO APOLOGIZE FOR CALLING YOU IGNORAMUS?
DON'T SAY THAT! DON'T REPEAT THAT WORD!
IGNORAMUS? OKAY, IF IT BUGS YOU, I WON'T SAY IGNORAMUS!
BUT IF I'M METAL-MOUTH, WHY CAN'T YOU BE IGNORAMUS?
YOU'RE DOING IT ON PURPOSE! ARE YOU MAKING FUN OF ME?
!
!
SHALL I SEND A TELEPATHIC MESSAGE TO WILL AND CORNELIA?
GOOD IDEA. CALL FOR BACKUP, TARANEE. HAY LIN IS TICKING HIM OFF.
EMPTY HER LOCKER, KURT. THIS FUNNY GIRL IS MESSIN' WITH THE WRONG GUY.
MY PLEASURE, URIAH.
NO!
CLUD
!
CRY

YOU CAN'T DO WHATEVER YOU WANT. LEAVE, OR I'LL TELL THE PRINCIPAL.
I thought we weren't gonna tick them off!
I'M TERRIFIED. SHOULD WE LEAVE, GUYS?
I WOULD IF I WERE YOU!
AND QUICKLY.
THINGS ARE GETTING HEATED!
WE NEED A FIRE EXTINGUISHER!
UH-OH.
HA-HA-HA!
YOU MORON! I'LL...
KSSSSSS
No, Cornelia. We can't use our powers here.
Then what are we supposed to do?

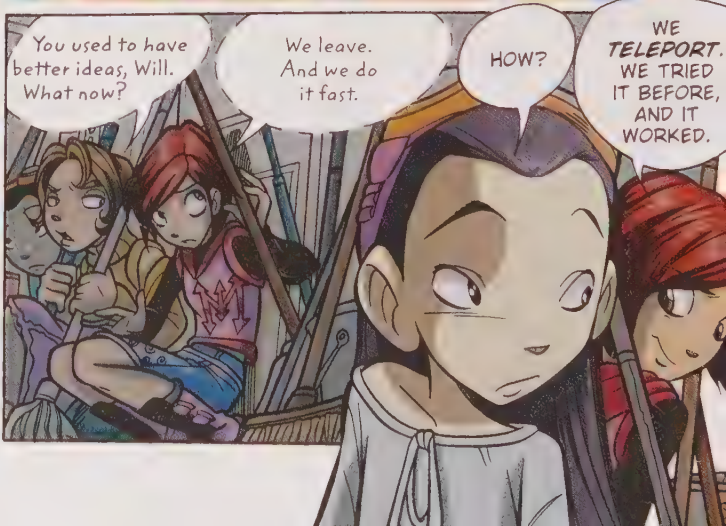

...RUN!
GET 'ER, GUYS!
!


THANKS FOR YOUR HELP ANYWAY!
WHAT WERE YOU GONNA DO? TRANSFORM THEM? HIT THEM WITH A LIGHTING BOLT?

WE'RE AT SCHOOL, IN CASE YOU HADN'T NOTICED. WE HAVE TO BE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.
THERE THEY ARE!

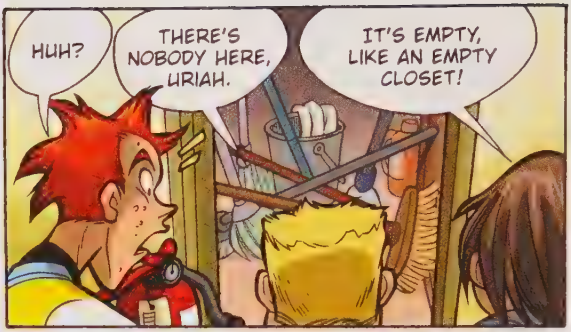

THE JANITOR'S CLOSET! IN HERE, QUICK!
RESERVED

HUH?
CLACK

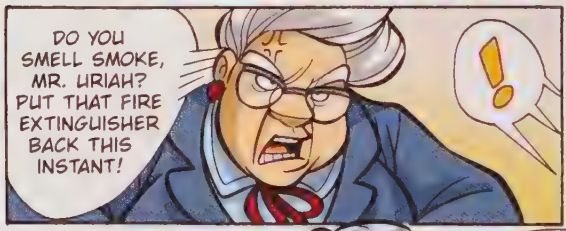

You used to have better ideas, Will. What now?
We leave. And we do it fast.
HOW?
WE TELEPORT. WE TRIED IT BEFORE, AND IT WORKED.

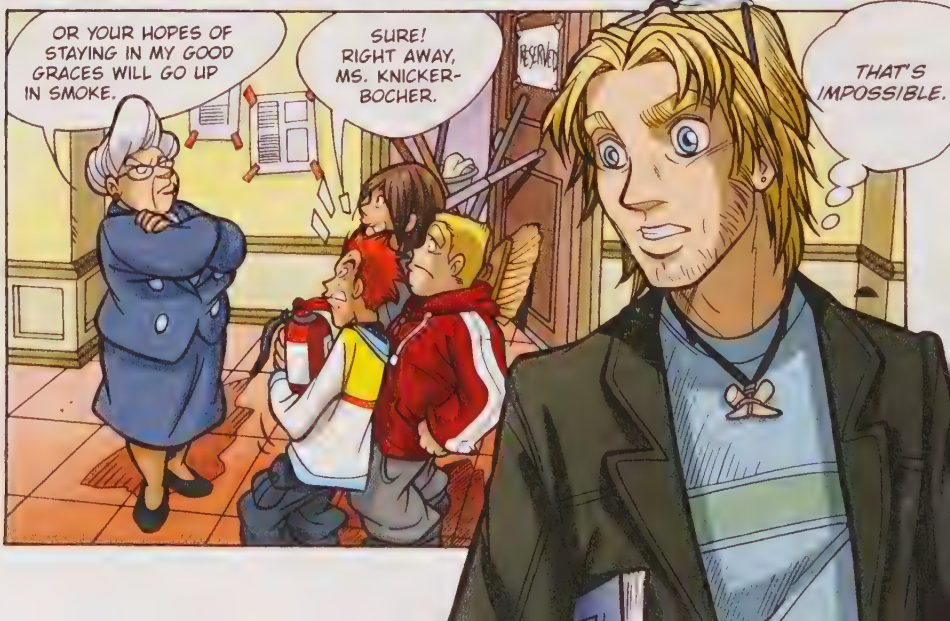
RIGHT! LET'S TELEPORT OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL BEFORE WE'RE CAUGHT BY URIAH AND HIS GANG.
IN THAT CASE, FOCUS!
THINK ABOUT YOUR FINAL DESTINATION AND...
=PANT= =PANT=
=SNORT= MR. SYLLA, HAVE YOU SEEN WILL AND HER FRIENDS?
RESERVED
YES, ACTUALLY, I...
...LET'S GO!
SHAAAAAAAAAARTZ
TOC TUNK
RESERVED
BUMP
AH-HA! THEY'RE IN THERE!

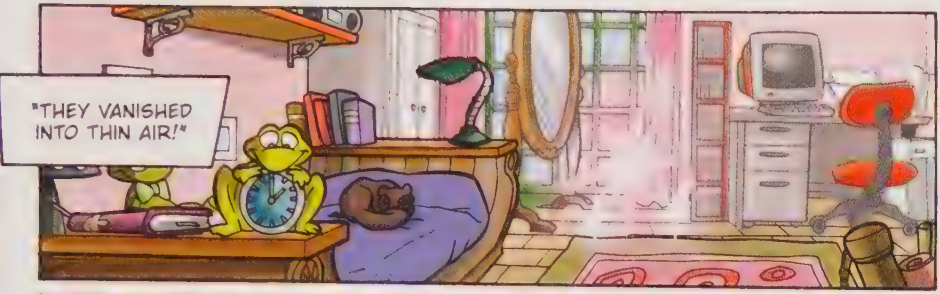
GOTCHA!

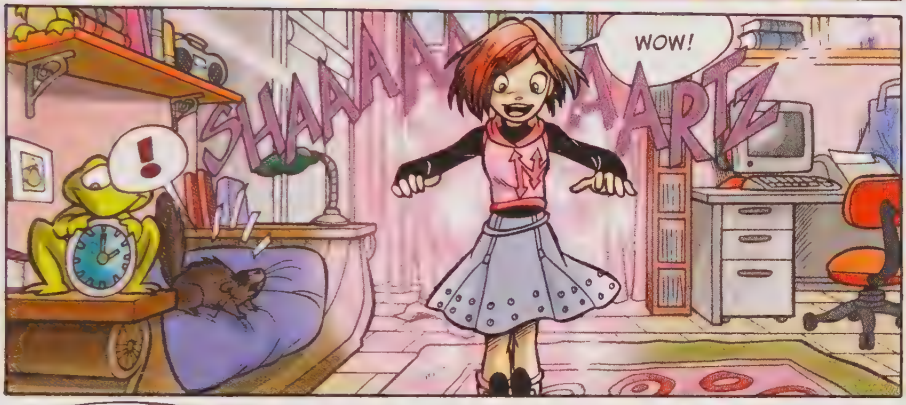

HUH?
THERE'S NOBODY HERE, URIAH.
IT'S EMPTY, LIKE AN EMPTY CLOSET!

MAN! THEY MUST'VE GOT OUT.
WE LOST 'EM!


DO YOU SMELL SMOKE, MR. URIAH? PUT THAT FIRE EXTINGUISHER BACK THIS INSTANT!
!

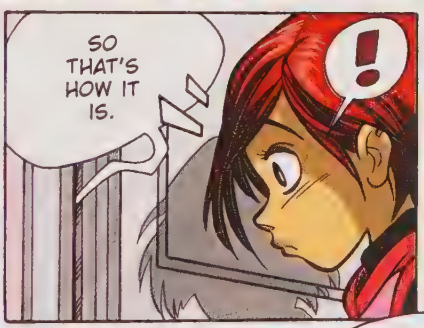

OR YOUR HOPES OF STAYING IN MY GOOD GRACES WILL GO UP IN SMOKE.
SURE! RIGHT AWAY, MS. KNICKER-BOCHER.
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.

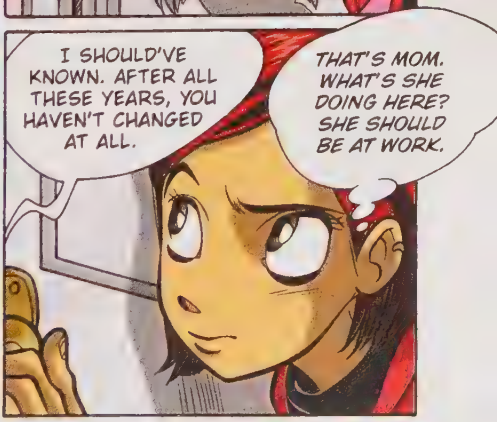

"THEY VANISHED INTO THIN AIR!"


SHAAAAA
WOW!
AARTZ

I SHOULD USE THIS TRICK MORE OFTEN. IT SAVES A LOT OF WALKING!

MIND YOU, IT ONLY WORKS IF NOBODY'S HOME AND...


SO THAT'S HOW IT IS.


I SHOULD'VE KNOWN. AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL.
THAT'S MOM. WHAT'S SHE DOING HERE? SHE SHOULD BE AT WORK.

I'M CONSISTENT, SUSAN, AND THAT'S A QUALITY THAT'S USUALLY APPRECIATED.
YOU'RE DESPICABLE, THOMAS.
YOU GAVE YOUR WORD YOU'D LEAVE ME AND WILL ALONE FOREVER.
A PROMISE I'D GLADLY HAVE KEPT, MY DEAR, BUT SOMETIMES LIFE CALLS FOR DIFFICULT CHOICES.
IT WAS HARD, COMING HERE. BUT AFTER THIS, I PROMISE YOU'LL NEVER SEE ME AGAIN.
WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE YOU?
BECAUSE YOU HAVE NO CHOICE. I CAN TAKE WILL AWAY FROM YOU, AND BELIEVE ME, I'M READY TO DO IT.
BUT I COULD ALSO DROP PROCEEDINGS AND LEAVE YOU TO YOUR PEACEFUL LIFE AND YOUR HISTORY PROFESSOR.
I'VE SHOWN YOU I'M SERIOUS. NOW IT'S UP TO YOU.

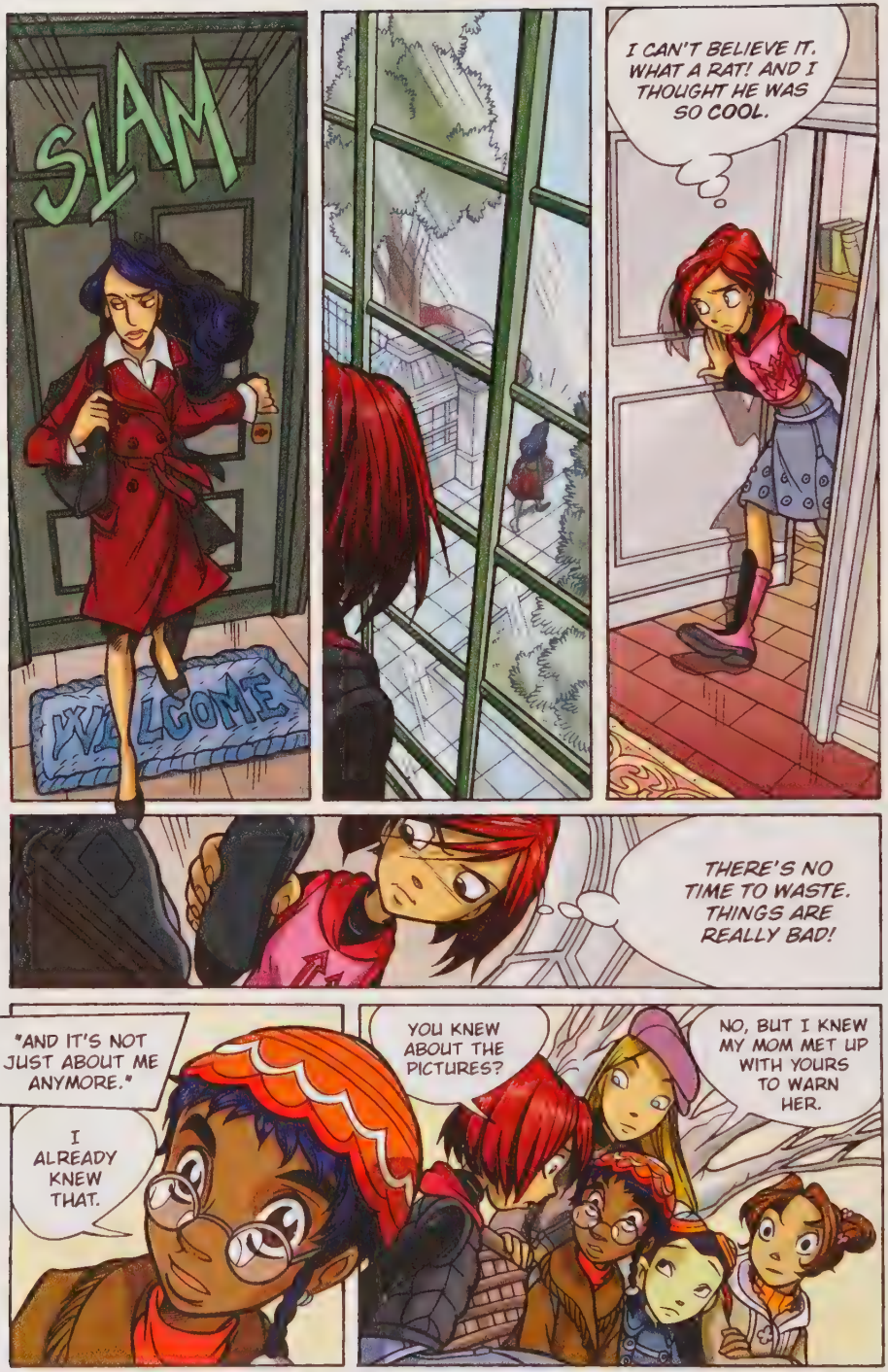
I NEED MONEY, SUSAN. A LOT OF MONEY. GIVE ME WHAT I ASK FOR, AND WILL GETS TO STAY.
GIVE ME THE WRONG ANSWER, AND I'LL TAKE YOUR DAUGHTER AWAY. FOREVER.
LIKE I SAID, HONEY, IT'S UP TO YOU.
SOMETIMES LIFE CREATES DIFFICULT SITUATIONS...

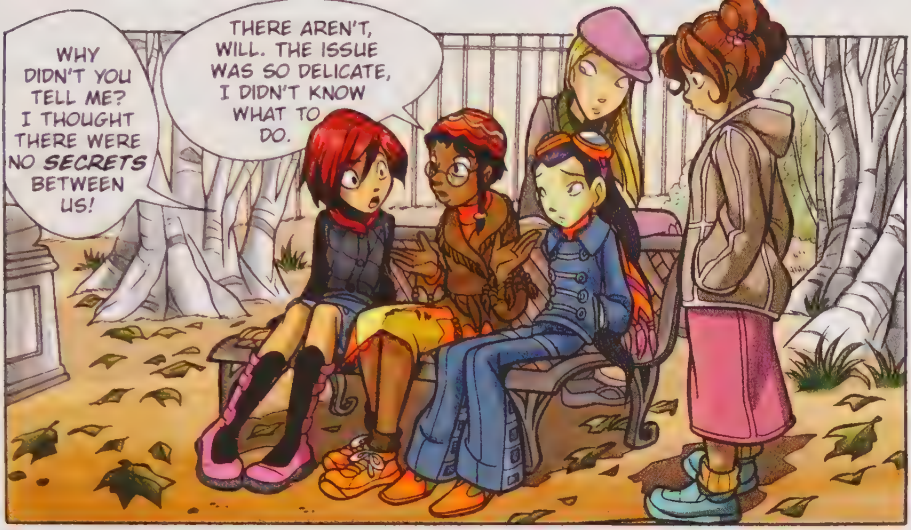
Witch
Will
Irma
Taranee
Cornelia
Hay Lin

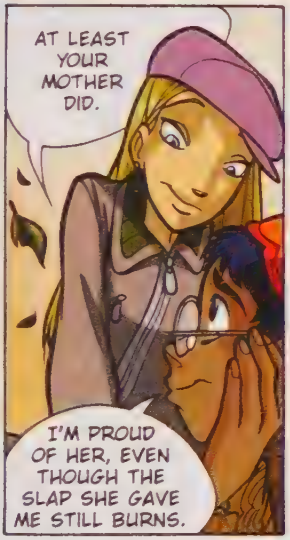
WILL'S DREAM OF A HAPPY, PEACEFUL, UNITED FAMILY SUDDENLY SHATTERS.
IN THE NEXT ROOM, HER MOM AND DAD ARE ARGUING.
FOR THE FIRST TIME AFTER SO MANY YEARS, WILL SEES THOMAS VANDOM'S TRUE COLORS.
AND SHE DOESN'T LIKE THEM AT ALL.
IT'S YOUR CHOICE, HONEY. WILL'S DESTINY IS IN YOUR HANDS.
LIKE I SAID, I'M WILLING TO DROP PROCEEDINGS IN THE CUSTODY HEARING.
FOR MONEY! HAVE YOU NO SHAME, THOMAS? YOU'RE EXTORTING ME FOR YOUR DAUGHTER!
HOW COULD YOU SINK SO LOW?
I'D BE FLYING MUCH HIGHER IF BUSINESS HAD GONE BETTER, SUSAN.

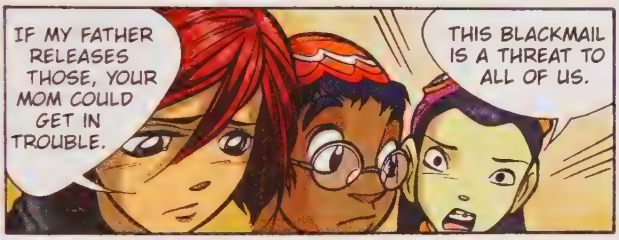
I HAVE A HUGE DEBT TO PAY TO SOME PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING IMPATIENT, AND YOU'RE MY LAST HOPE.
THIS BLACKMAIL IS SICKENING, THOMAS. YOU'RE A SCAMMER. I PITY YOU!
I HAD NO OTHER CHOICE. YOU'D NEVER WILLINGLY HELP ME.
I JUST HAD TO ASK MY DETECTIVE FRIEND HARVEY LIMERICK TO FOLLOW YOU. THE REST WAS EASY.
FIRST, THE PICTURES WITH YOUR DEAR MR. COLLINS...
...AND NOW THESE!
?
YOU AND YOUR JUDGE FRIEND LOOK GREAT!
SO WHAT? THERESA COOK IS MY FRIEND.
SHOULD THEY GO PUBLIC, YOUR FRIEND WOULD BE IN TROUBLE. YOUR CHOICE.

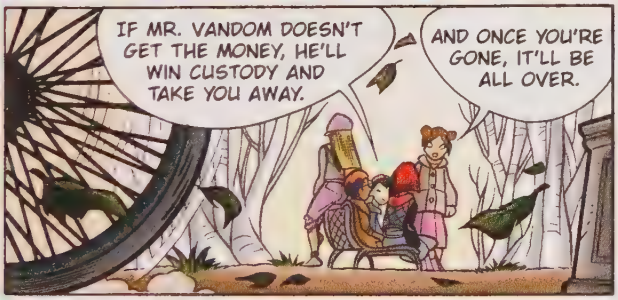
IF YOU GIVE ME WHAT I ASK, THESE PHOTOS WILL DISAPPEAR ALONG WITH THE TRIAL.
I DON'T WANT CUSTODY OF WILL. YOU CAN HAVE HER, BUT EVERYTHING HAS ITS PRICE.
YOU HAVE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS TO THINK ABOUT IT. HERE'S MY CELL NUMBER, AND THAT'S HOW MUCH I NEED.
THAT'S CRAZY! IT'S MORE THAN I HAVE IN THE BANK!
YOU'RE A RESOURCEFUL WOMAN, SUSAN. IMPROVISE!
AND REMEMBER, YOU HAVE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. NOT A MINUTE LONGER.
SLAM


SLAM
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. WHAT A RAT! AND I THOUGHT HE WAS SO COOL.
THERE'S NO TIME TO WASTE. THINGS ARE REALLY BAD!
"AND IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT ME ANYMORE."
I ALREADY KNEW THAT.
YOU KNEW ABOUT THE PICTURES?
NO, BUT I KNEW MY MOM MET UP WITH YOURS TO WARN HER.

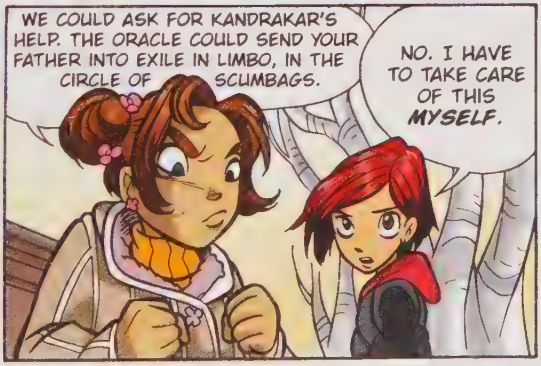

WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME? I THOUGHT THERE WERE NO SECRETS BETWEEN US!
THERE AREN'T, WILL. THE ISSUE WAS SO DELICATE, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.


AT LEAST YOUR MOTHER DID.
I'M PROUD OF HER, EVEN THOUGH THE SLAP SHE GAVE ME STILL BURNS.


IF MY FATHER RELEASES THOSE, YOUR MOM COULD GET IN TROUBLE.
THIS BLACKMAIL IS A THREAT TO ALL OF US.

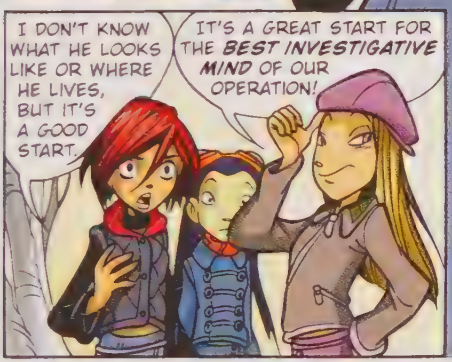

IF MR. VANDOM DOESN'T GET THE MONEY, HE'LL WIN CUSTODY AND TAKE YOU AWAY.
AND ONCE YOU'RE GONE, IT'LL BE ALL OVER.

IT'LL BE THE END OF W.I.T.C.H.!
WE'RE STILL STANDING. WE'RE STILL HERE, AND HERE WE'LL STAY!

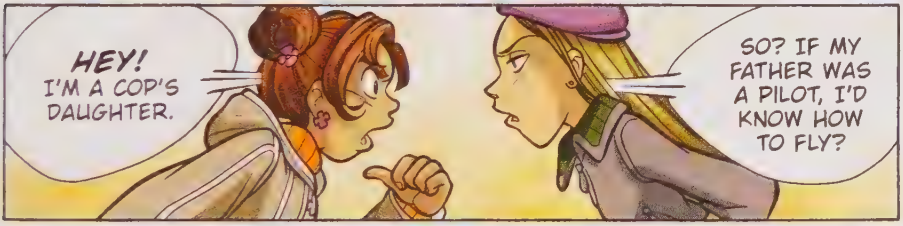

WE COULD ASK FOR KANDRAKAR'S HELP. THE ORACLE COULD SEND YOUR FATHER INTO EXILE IN LIMBO, IN THE CIRCLE OF SCUMBAGS.
NO. I HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF THIS MYSELF.

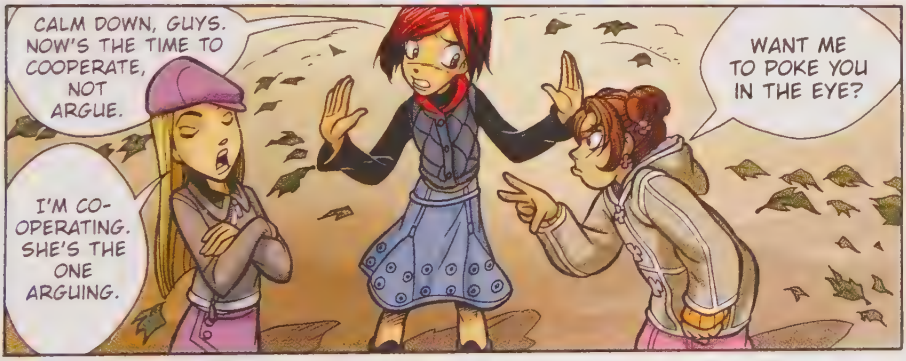
I'M WITH WILL. THIS TIME, WE HAVE TO HANDLE IT OURSELVES.
ISN'T THAT WHAT WE ALWAYS DO?
HAVE YOU GOT A PLAN?
NO. I JUST WANT TO STOP HIM, BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW.
WE ALL HAVE A WEAK SPOT, AND THAT APPLIES TO MY FATHER TOO.
BUT YOU DON'T KNOW HIM WELL ENOUGH TO KNOW WHERE TO HIT HIM.
YOU DON'T, BUT KADMA MUST KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT HIM.
WHY KADMA?
SIMPLE! IF HER RISING STAR FOUNDATION* HAS BEEN WATCHING WILL, THEY MUST KNOW ALL ABOUT HER...
...AND MY FAMILY. YOU'RE RIGHT, HAY LIN!
*SEE W.I.T.C.H. #19
I'LL GO BACK TO FADDEN HILLS AND TALK TO HER.
I'M COMING WITH YOU. MY MOM'S FUTURE IS AT STAKE TOO.
WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO? I DON'T WANNA SIT HERE TWIDDLING MY THUMBS.
WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THE PHOTOS, IRMA.

WITHOUT THOSE, HIS THREATS AGAINST JUDGE COOK WLL BURST LIKE A BUBBLE.
WE JUST HAVE TO GET HOLD OF THEM. IF ONLY WE KNEW WHERE TO LOOK!
HARVEY SLIMERICK! WRITE HIS NAME DOWN. HE'S THE DETECTIVE WORKING FOR MY DAD.


I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE OR WHERE HE LIVES, BUT IT'S A GOOD START.
IT'S A GREAT START FOR THE BEST INVESTIGATIVE MIND OF OUR OPERATION!

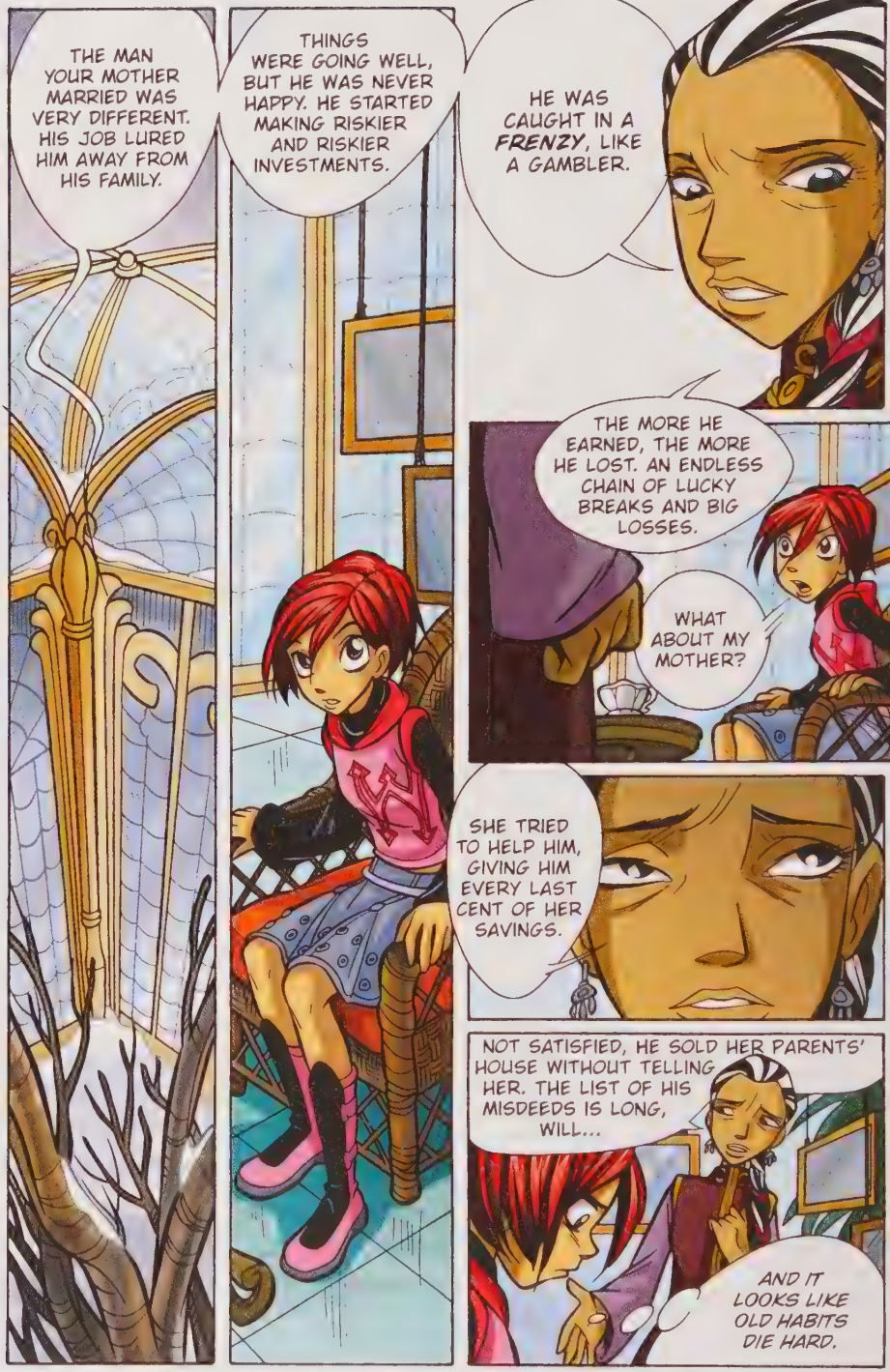
IT'S JUST A NAME, CORNY. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'LL BE ABLE TO DO WITH IT.
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE NOT THE BEST INVESTIGATIVE MIND I'M TALKING ABOUT.

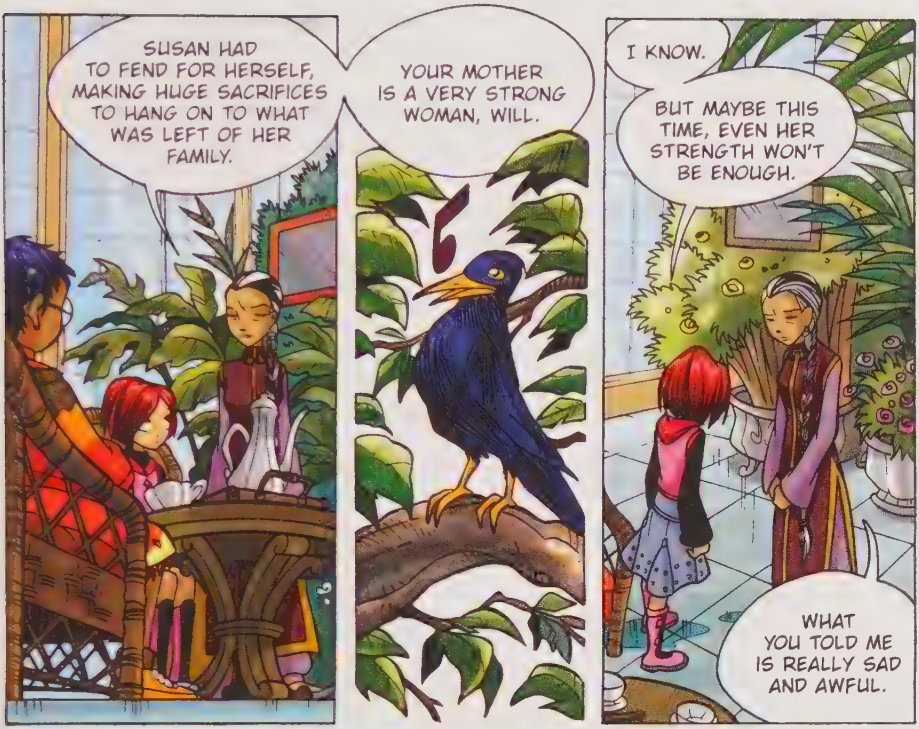

HEY! I'M A COP'S DAUGHTER.
SO? IF MY FATHER WAS A PILOT, I'D KNOW HOW TO FLY?

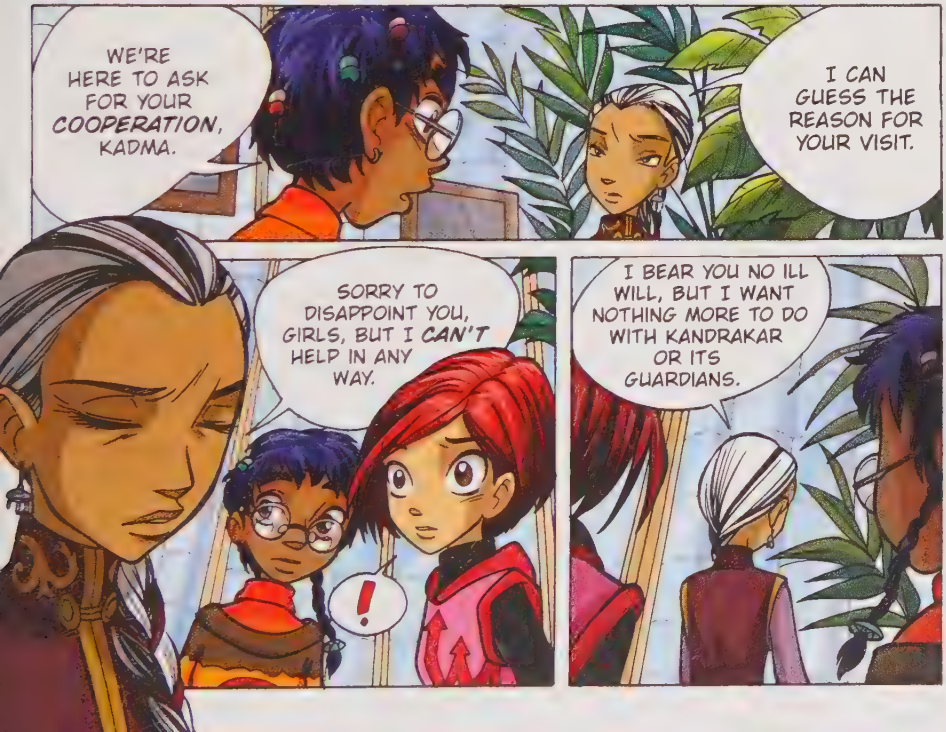

CALM DOWN, GUYS. NOW'S THE TIME TO COOPERATE, NOT ARGUE.
I'M CO-OPERATING. SHE'S THE ONE ARGUING.
WANT ME TO POKE YOU IN THE EYE?

WORK IT OUT BY TOMORROW.
THEN LET'S GET CRACKING.
LET'S GO TO FADDEN HILLS?
YEAH. I NEED YOUR WARMTH.
"IT'S COLD THERE THIS TIME OF YEAR."
SHAAAAA-AAAAARTZ
LET'S HOPE KADMA'S HOME. I WOULDN'T WANT THIS TRIP TO BE FOR NOTHING.
IT WASN'T FOR NOTHING, TARANEE. KADMA'S HERE ALL RIGHT.
AND THANKS TO CIPU, NOW SHE KNOWS WE ARE TOO.

SO...
I KNOW THOMAS VANDOM WELL. WHEN HE LEFT, YOU WERE JUST A FEW YEARS OLD.
TELL ME EVERYTHING. MY MOM DOESN'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT HIM.
YOUR FATHER HAS ALWAYS BEEN INTO BUSINESS. HE'S AN AMBITIOUS MAN, OBSESSED WITH MONEY AND SUCCESS.
HIS STORY WOULD BE TOO LONG TO TELL, AND ANYWAY, IT'S NOTHING NEW.
I DON'T BLAME HER. THAT MAN MADE HER LIFE HELL.
LIKE MANY OTHERS, HE SACRIFICED THE THINGS HE LOVED IN THE NAME OF GREED AND SELFISHNESS.
A LOT OF PEOPLE SUFFERED BECAUSE OF HIM, AND THAT'S WHY HE'S LOST FOREVER.

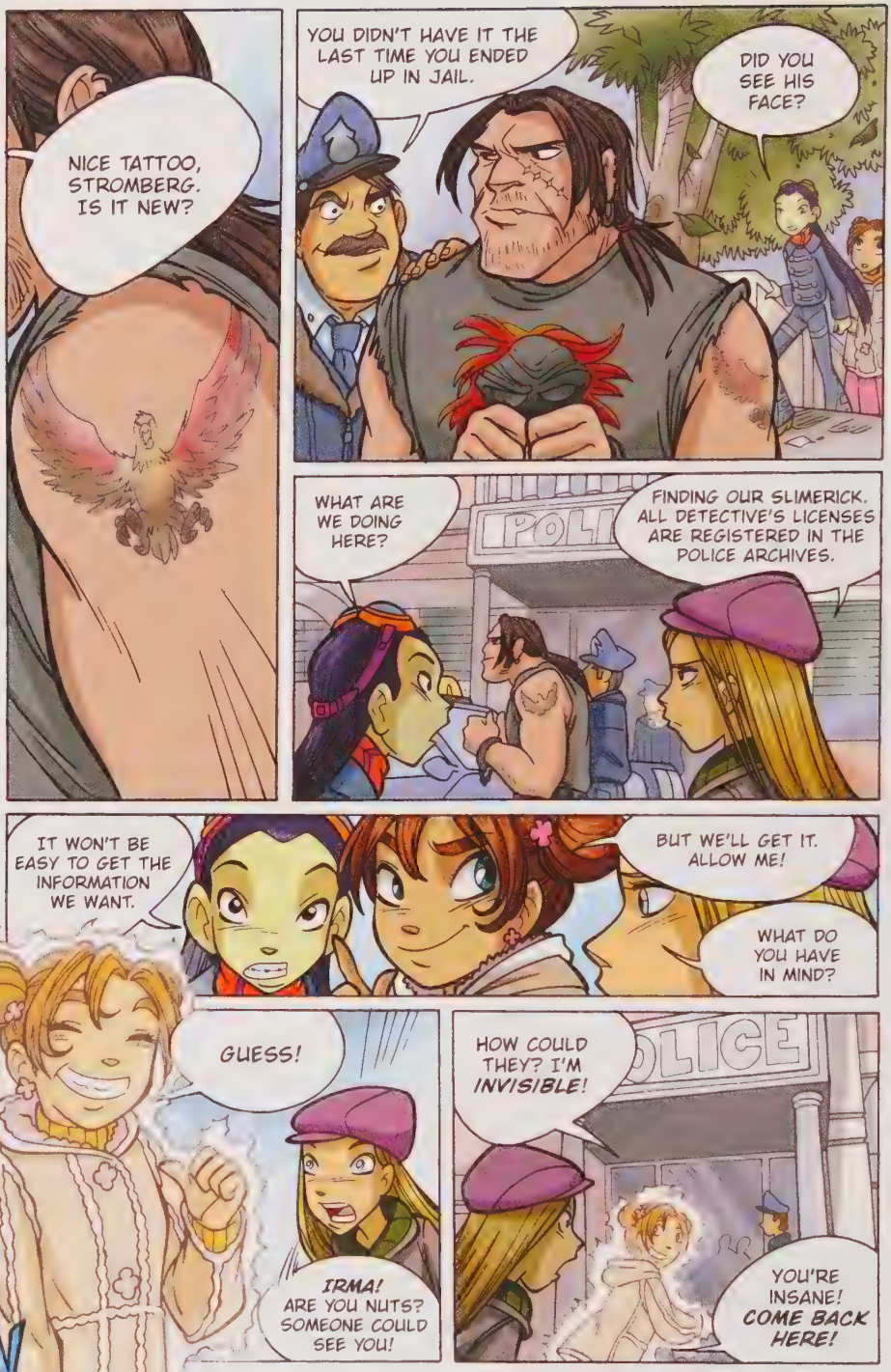

THE MAN YOUR MOTHER MARRIED WAS VERY DIFFERENT. HIS JOB LURED HIM AWAY FROM HIS FAMILY.
THINGS WERE GOING WELL, BUT HE WAS NEVER HAPPY. HE STARTED MAKING RISKIER AND RISKIER INVESTMENTS.
HE WAS CAUGHT IN A FRENZY, LIKE A GAMBLER.
THE MORE HE EARNED, THE MORE HE LOST. AN ENDLESS CHAIN OF LUCKY BREAKS AND BIG LOSSES.
WHAT ABOUT MY MOTHER?
SHE TRIED TO HELP HIM, GIVING HIM EVERY LAST CENT OF HER SAVINGS.
NOT SATISFIED, HE SOLD HER PARENTS' HOUSE WITHOUT TELLING HER. THE LIST OF HIS MISDEEDS IS LONG, WILL...
AND IT LOOKS LIKE OLD HABITS DIE HARD.

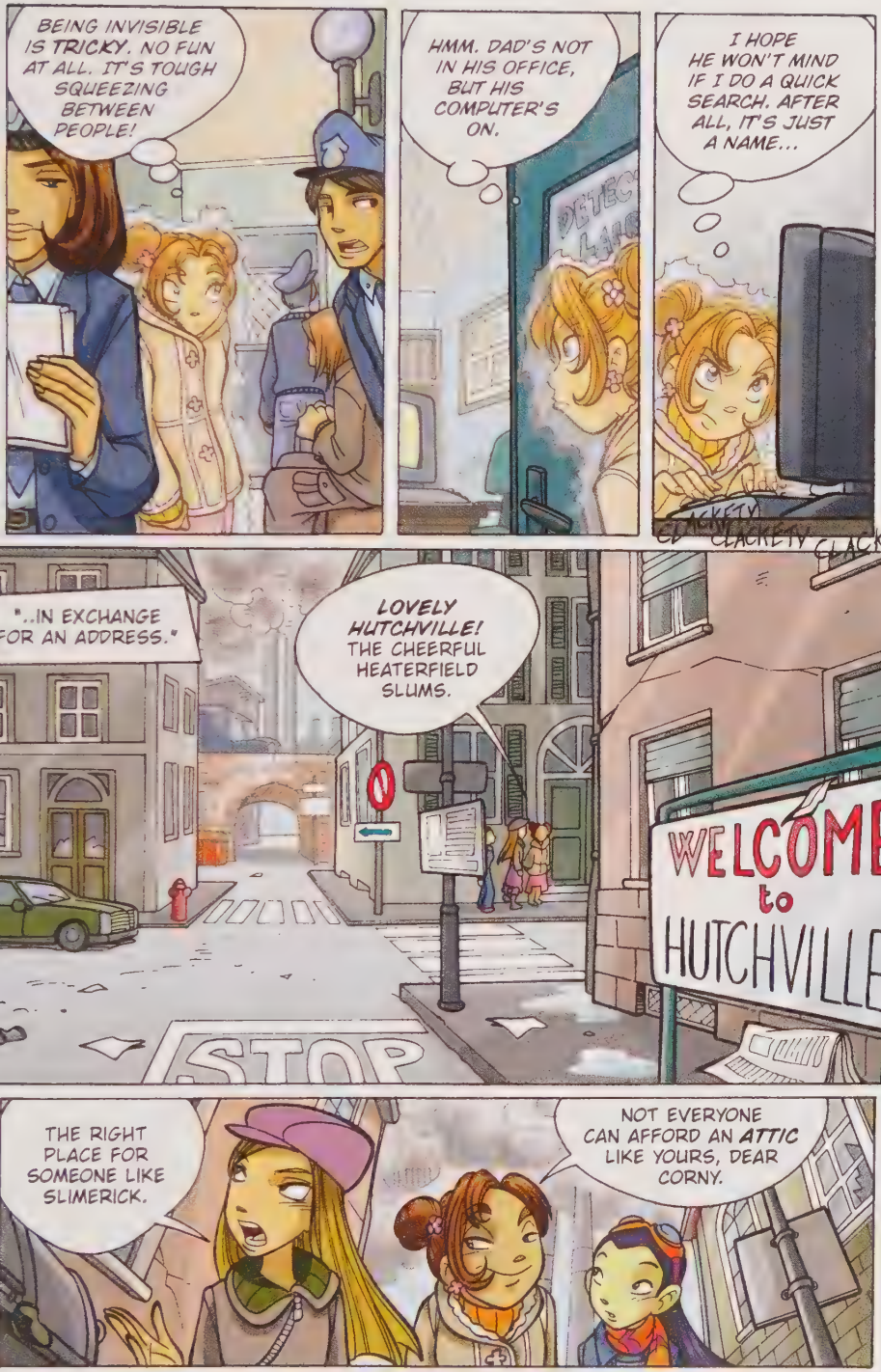

SUSAN HAD TO FEND FOR HERSELF, MAKING HUGE SACRIFICES TO HANG ON TO WHAT WAS LEFT OF HER FAMILY.
YOUR MOTHER IS A VERY STRONG WOMAN, WILL.
I KNOW.
BUT MAYBE THIS TIME, EVEN HER STRENGTH WON'T BE ENOUGH.
WHAT YOU TOLD ME IS REALLY SAD AND AWFUL.

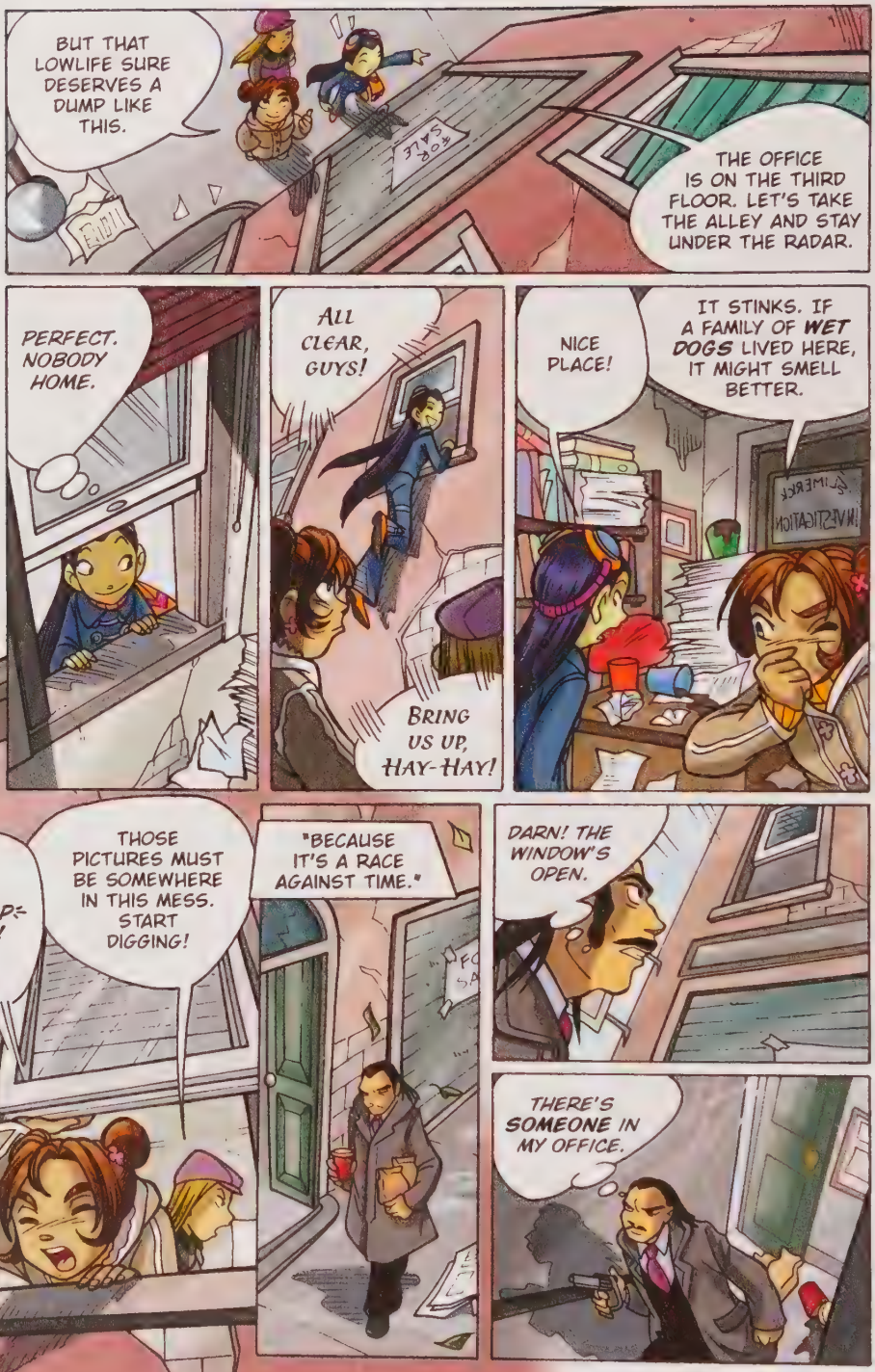

WE'RE HERE TO ASK FOR YOUR COOPERATION, KADMA.
I CAN GUESS THE REASON FOR YOUR VISIT.
SORRY TO DISAPPOINT YOU, GIRLS, BUT I CAN'T HELP IN ANY WAY.
!
I BEAR YOU NO ILL WILL, BUT I WANT NOTHING MORE TO DO WITH KANDRAKAR OR ITS GUARDIANS.

I HAD A TASK, AND I COMPLETED IT. I FOLLOWED AND PROTECTED YOU UNTIL THE MOMENT OF REVELATION.
AND WHEN I GAVE YOU HALINOR'S DIARY, MY MISSION WAS OVER.*
*SEE W.I.T.C.H. #
THE RISING STAR FOUNDATION WILL CONTINUE HELPING THOSE IN NEED.
YOU HAVE THE STRENGTH TO FEND FOR YOURSELF NOW.
WHY DON'T YOU CARE? IF WILL LEAVES HEATHERFIELD, WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO W.I.T.C.H.?
IT MAY SURPRISE YOU, TARANEE, BUT THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME.
WHAT?
YOU...YOU'RE...
YOU'VE BEEN VERY KIND. THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU'VE TOLD US, AND I'M SORRY TO HAVE BOTHERED YOU.
?

WHAT ARE YOU APOLOGIZING FOR?
IT'S TIME TO GO, TARANEE.
"THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO DO HERE."
SHAAAAR
I DON'T OWE ANYTHING TO ANYONE, CIPU.
ANYONE!
AT


NICE TATTOO, STROMBERG. IS IT NEW?
YOU DIDN'T HAVE IT THE LAST TIME YOU ENDED UP IN JAIL.
DID YOU SEE HIS FACE?
WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?
FINDING OUR SLIMERICK. ALL DETECTIVE'S LICENSES ARE REGISTERED IN THE POLICE ARCHIVES.
IT WON'T BE EASY TO GET THE INFORMATION WE WANT.
BUT WE'LL GET IT. ALLOW ME!
WHAT DO YOU HAVE IN MIND?
GUESS!
IRMA! ARE YOU NUTS? SOMEONE COULD SEE YOU!
HOW COULD THEY? I'M INVISIBLE!
YOU'RE INSANE! COME BACK HERE!


BEING INVISIBLE IS TRICKY. NO FUN AT ALL. IT'S TOUGH SQUEEZING BETWEEN PEOPLE!
HMM. DAD'S NOT IN HIS OFFICE, BUT HIS COMPUTER'S ON.
I HOPE HE WON'T MIND IF I DO A QUICK SEARCH. AFTER ALL, IT'S JUST A NAME...
CLACKETY CLACKETY CLACK
"...IN EXCHANGE FOR AN ADDRESS."
LOVELY HUTCHVILLE! THE CHEERFUL HEATERFIELD SLUMS.
111
WELCOME to HUTCHVILLE
STOP
THE RIGHT PLACE FOR SOMEONE LIKE SLIMERICK.
NOT EVERYONE CAN AFFORD AN ATTIC LIKE YOURS, DEAR CORNY.


BUT THAT LOWLIFE SURE DESERVES A DUMP LIKE THIS.
FOR SALE
THE OFFICE IS ON THE THIRD FLOOR. LET'S TAKE THE ALLEY AND STAY UNDER THE RADAR.
PERFECT. NOBODY HOME.
ALL CLEAR, GUYS!
BRING US UP, HAY-HAY!
NICE PLACE!
IT STINKS. IF A FAMILY OF WET DOGS LIVED HERE, IT MIGHT SMELL BETTER.
112
-GASP- AIR!
THOSE PICTURES MUST BE SOMEWHERE IN THIS MESS. START DIGGING!
"BECAUSE IT'S A RACE AGAINST TIME."
DARN! THE WINDOW'S OPEN.
THERE'S SOMEONE IN MY OFFICE.

NOTHING HERE EITHER.
MAYBE THEY'RE IN A SAFE...OR A SECRET HIDING PLACE.
I HOPE NOT!
TUCK TUMP
!
!
SLIMERICK INVESTIGATION
SPRANG
FREEZE!
HUH?
THERE'S NOBODY HERE!
LET'S GO, QUICK!
WHAT ARE WE GONNA TELL WILL?

THE NEXT DAY AT THE VANDOM RESIDENCE.
YOU DID EVERYTHING YOU COULD, GUYS. THANK YOU SO MUCH.
BUT NOW ALL WE CAN DO IS WAIT.
IT'S NEARLY MIDDAY. WHAT'S SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN NOW?
MOM!
!
CLUNK
SHOULDN'T YOU BE AT SCHOOL?
WE FINISHED EARLY. THERE WAS A STRIKE OR SOMETHING. WHY AREN'T YOU AT WORK?
THERE WAS A STRIKE OR SOMETHING.
I SEE. WELL, IF YOU NEED US, WE'RE IN THERE.
WHAT IS SHE GOING TO DO?
I DON'T KNOW.
"BUT I TRUST HER."
COME ON, THOMAS, CALL. I'M WAITING FOR YOU.

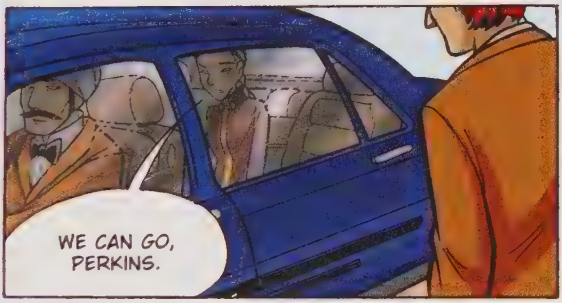
I WANT YOU TO KNOW I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU AND WON'T GIVE IN TO BLACK-MAIL.
YOU'LL NEVER HAVE WILL!
RRRING
HELLO?
Y-YES?
REALLY? OH... I UNDERSTAND. THANK YOU!
THANK YOU?
WHO WAS THAT?
JUDGE COOK. HONEY, SHE CALLED ME FROM COURT WITH SOME NEWS.
FIVE MINUTES AGO, YOUR FATHER DROPPED PROCEEDINGS.
YAHOOO!

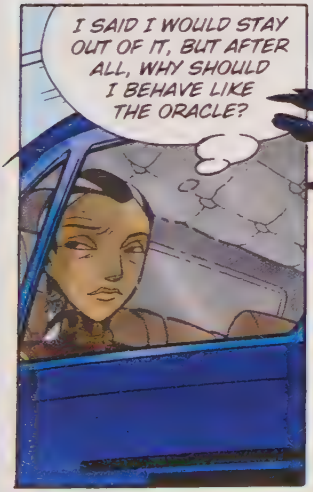
HOW'S THAT POSSIBLE? DID HE CHANGE HIS MIND?
I DON'T KNOW HOW IT HAPPENED OR WHY, BUT IT'S GREAT!
TOC TOC TOC
TOC TOC TOC
CIPU?
ALL DONE, MR. VANDOM?
ALL DONE.

GOOD. THIS IS FOR YOU. AS YOU CAN SEE, THE AMOUNT IS *GREATER* THAN WHAT YOU ASKED FOR.

CONSIDER IT A LITTLE INCENTIVE TO DISAPPEAR ONCE AND FOR ALL.
YOU CAN COUNT ON IT, MISS. I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE OR WHY YOU DID THIS, BUT WE HAVE A DEAL.

AND DON'T FORGET, MR. VANDOM...
I'M WATCHING YOU.

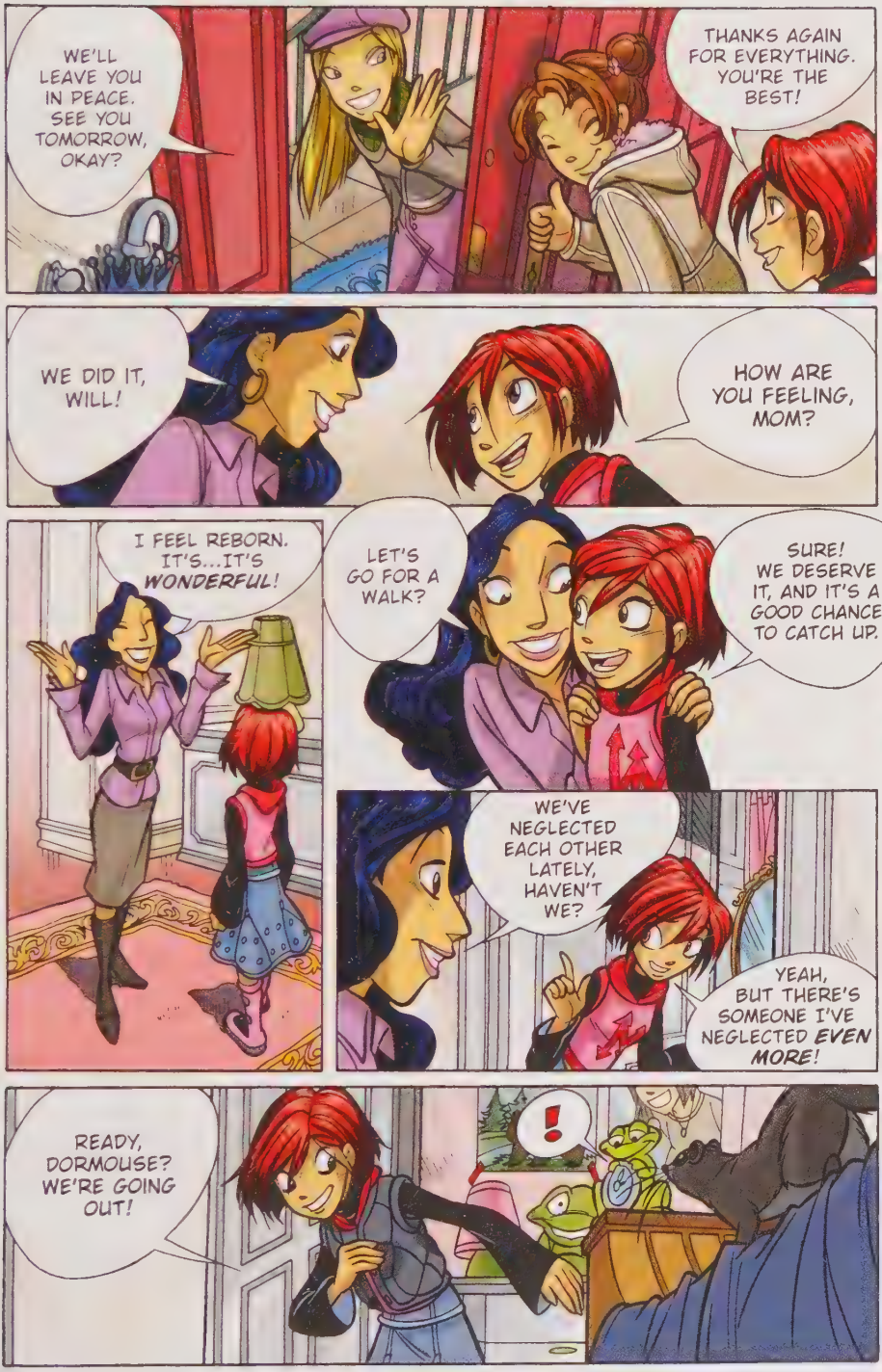

WE CAN GO, PERKINS.


I SAID I WOULD STAY OUT OF IT, BUT AFTER ALL, WHY SHOULD I BEHAVE LIKE THE ORACLE?

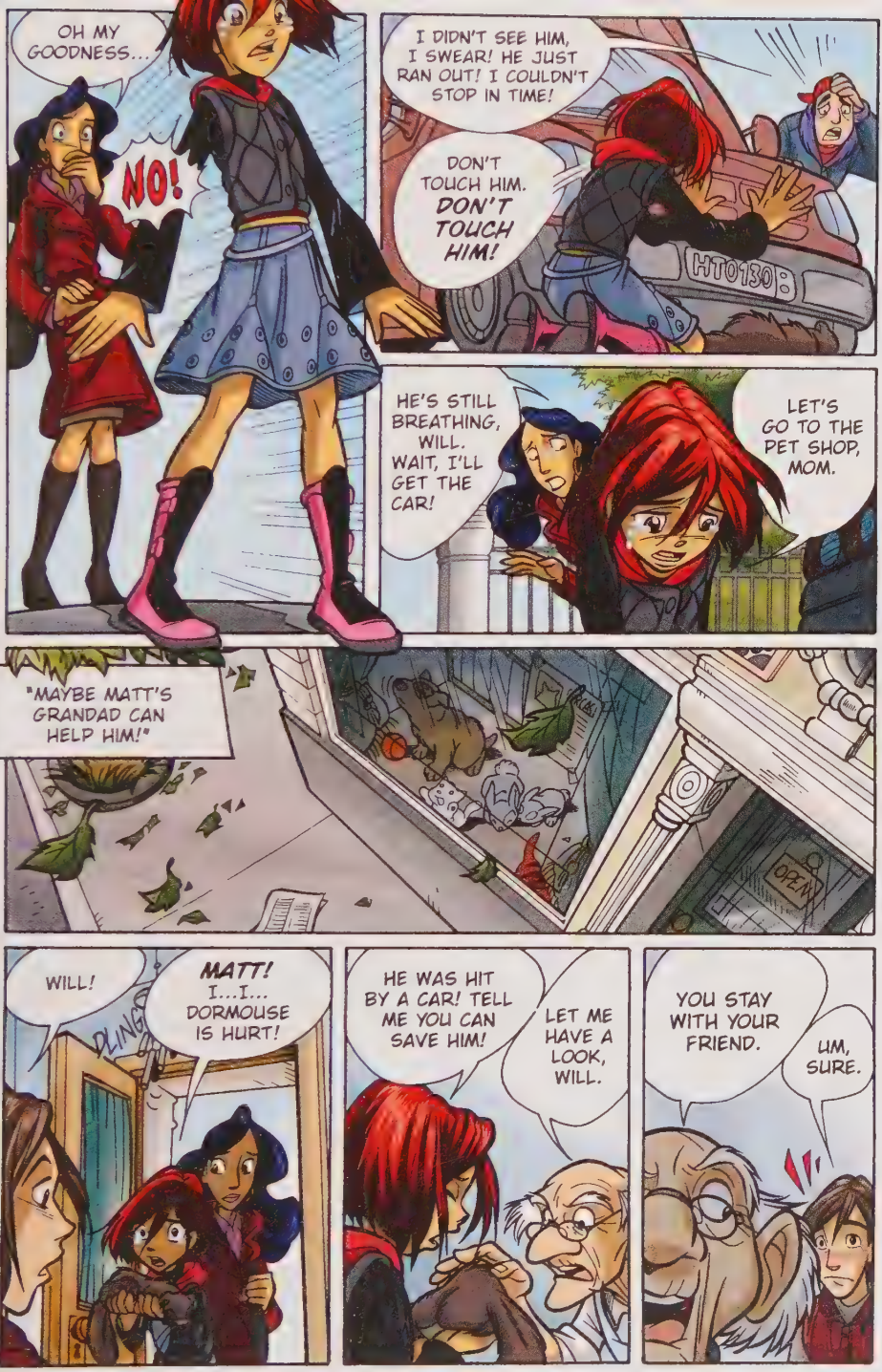
HAPPY, CIPU? LET'S GO HOME.

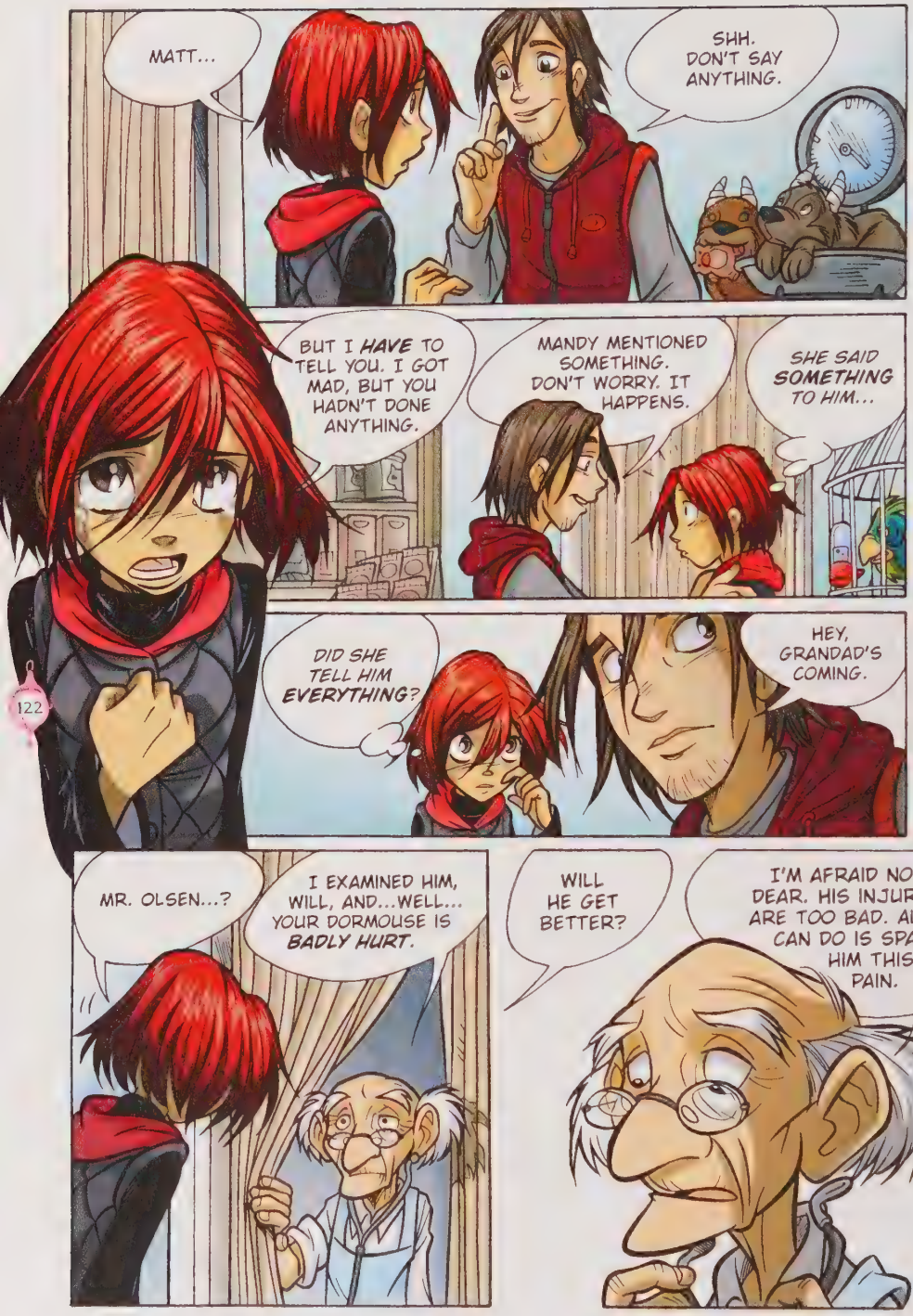
BREEEEEP
BREEEEEP
BREEEP

HI, SLIMERICK. OH, SURE, YOUR MONEY! SORRY, MAN, BUT MY PLANS HAVE CHANGED...
...AND I DON'T NEED YOUR PHOTOS ANYMORE.
WHICH MEANS I DON'T OWE YOU ANYTHING.
CLICK
RING, RING...
BREEEEEP BREEEEEP BREEEEEP
BREEEEEEP BREEEEEP BREEEEEEP
I DON'T FEEL LIKE TALKING TO YOU.
HE'S NOT ANSWERING. ONCE AGAIN, HE DISAPPEARS WITHOUT A TRACE.
YOU KNOW WHAT, WILL? IT'S BETTER THIS WAY.
HEY, MAYBE WE SHOULD GET GOING.


WE'LL LEAVE YOU IN PEACE. SEE YOU TOMORROW, OKAY?
THANKS AGAIN FOR EVERYTHING. YOU'RE THE BEST!
WE DID IT, WILL!
HOW ARE YOU FEELING, MOM?
I FEEL REBORN. IT'S...IT'S WONDERFUL!
LET'S GO FOR A WALK?
SURE! WE DESERVE IT, AND IT'S A GOOD CHANCE TO CATCH UP.
WE'VE NEGLECTED EACH OTHER LATELY, HAVEN'T WE?
YEAH, BUT THERE'S SOMEONE I'VE NEGLECTED EVEN MORE!
READY, DORMOUSE? WE'RE GOING OUT!
!

TOMORROW I'LL GO SEE JUDGE COOK. I WANT TO KNOW EVERY DETAIL. WHAT COULD HAVE MADE THOMAS CHANGE HIS MIND?
MAYBE I SHOULD ASK KADMA...
...BUT I DON'T THINK WE'LL EVER KNOW.
WATCH OUT!
DORMOUSE! COME BACK!
DOR-MOUSE!
SKREEEEEE


OH MY GOODNESS...
NO!
I DIDN'T SEE HIM, I SWEAR! HE JUST RAN OUT! I COULDN'T STOP IN TIME!
DON'T TOUCH HIM. DON'T TOUCH HIM!
HT0130
HE'S STILL BREATHING, WILL. WAIT, I'LL GET THE CAR!
LET'S GO TO THE PET SHOP, MOM.
"MAYBE MATT'S GRANDAD CAN HELP HIM!"
OPEN
WILL!
DLING
MATT! I...I... DORMOUSE IS HURT!
HE WAS HIT BY A CAR! TELL ME YOU CAN SAVE HIM!
LET ME HAVE A LOOK, WILL.
YOU STAY WITH YOUR FRIEND.
UM, SURE.


MATT...
SHH. DON'T SAY ANYTHING.
BUT I HAVE TO TELL YOU. I GOT MAD, BUT YOU HADN'T DONE ANYTHING.
MANDY MENTIONED SOMETHING. DON'T WORRY. IT HAPPENS.
SHE SAID SOMETHING TO HIM...
DID SHE TELL HIM EVERYTHING?
HEY, GRANDAD'S COMING.
MR. OLSEN...?
I EXAMINED HIM, WILL, AND...WELL... YOUR DORMOUSE IS BADLY HURT.
WILL HE GET BETTER?
I'M AFRAID NOT, DEAR. HIS INJURIES ARE TOO BAD. ALL I CAN DO IS SPARE HIM THIS PAIN.

I HAVE TO PUT HIM TO SLEEP, WILL.
NO!
WILL..
NO! IT'S NOT FAIR!
WHY, MOM? WHY? EVERYTHING WAS GOING WELL. WHY DID THIS HAPPEN?
I DON'T KNOW, BABY. I'M SO SORRY. DON'T CRY...
CAN I SEE HIM, MR. OLSEN?
COME WITH ME, WILL...

DORMOUSE...
DORMOUSE...
I'M SORRY, WILL, BUT NOW YOU HAVE TO STEP OUT.
AND TRUST ME, MY DEAR. DON'T LOOK BACK.
!
Good-bye, Dormouse. I love you...

END OF CHAPTER 26

27

The Departure

"When will we be free to choose?"

SOMEONE IS RUNNING AWAY FROM HEATHERFIELD'S SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE...
ield Institute
PUFF... PUFF...

HEY, MISS! WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!
SORRY!
TUMP

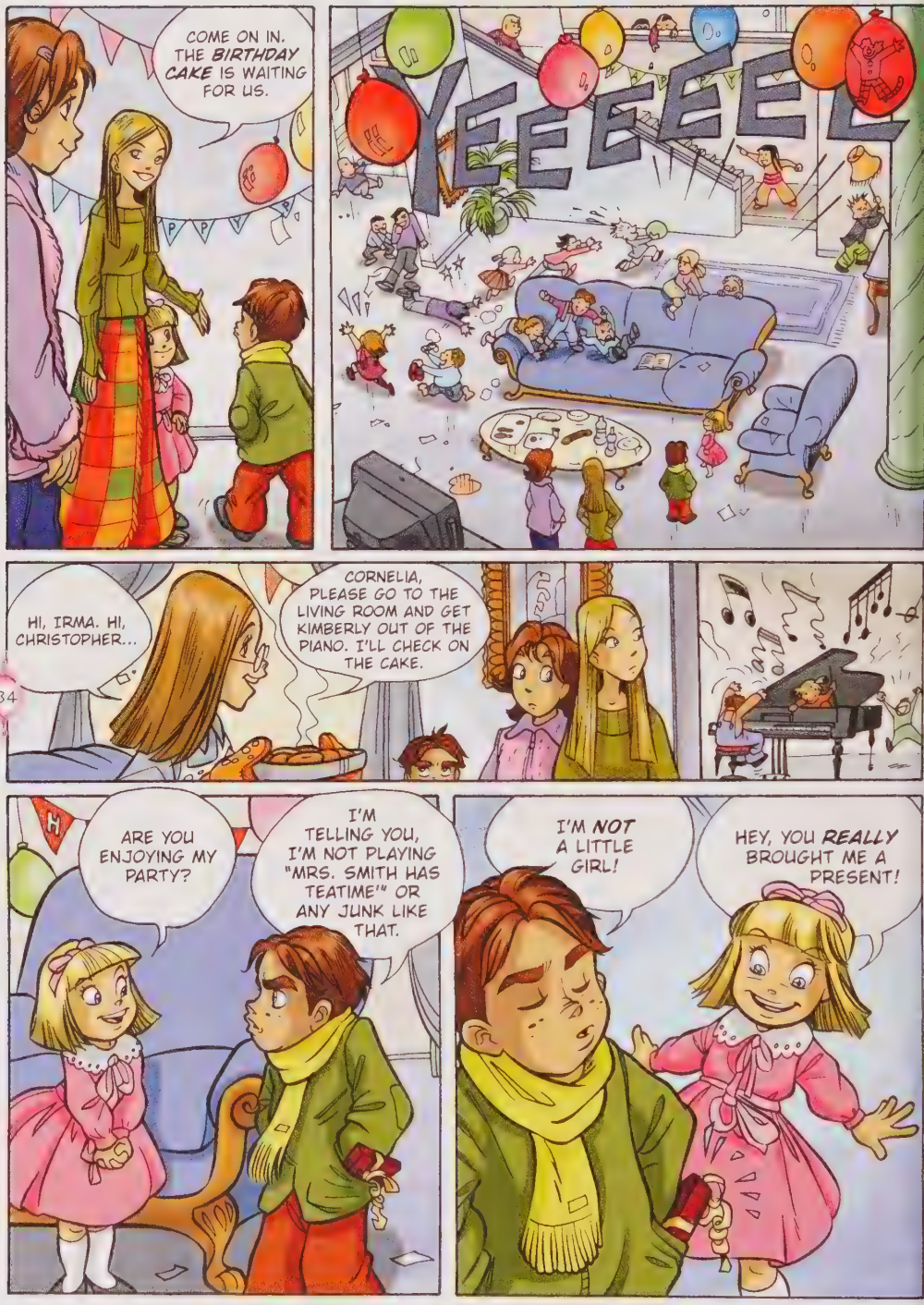
BEEEP
OOPS!
SKREEEE

-PUFF-
-PANT-
I MADE IT!
SBAM

TARANEE! WHAT'S GOING ON?
=PUFF=
I MADE IT...
ARE YOU READY?
THEY PICKED ME!
I'M GOING TO REDSTONE!
YES! YES! YES!
HA-HA-HA! WELL DONE, GIRL!
GET DOWN! DO YOU WANT TO BREAK A LEG?
REDSTONE, A SURFER'S PARADISE!
YOU'LL SEE THE WAVES!
PETER, DON'T YOU START TOO!

IF I GIVE YOU MONEY, WILL YOU BUY ME A SURFBOARD? THEY MAKE SPECIAL ONES THERE.
FORGET IT.
PASSPORT... MEDICINES... I HAVE TO GET THE SUITCASE FROM THE ATTIC...
NOW SIT DOWN AND EAT. WE'LL SORT EVERYTHING OUT AFTER LUNCH.
I'LL GO TO MY ROOM.
MY BABY! I KNEW SHE'D MAKE IT.
NO, I'M NOT HUNGRY. I'VE GOT A BIT OF A HEADACHE, THOUGH...
I'M WORRIED ABOUT TARANEE. SHE'S ALWAYS GOT A HEADACHE, AND NOW THAT SHE'S GOING AWAY...
BELIEVE ME, SHE'LL BE FINE. SHE CAN TAKE CARE OF HERSELF.
REDSTONE IS SO FAR! IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO HER, I...

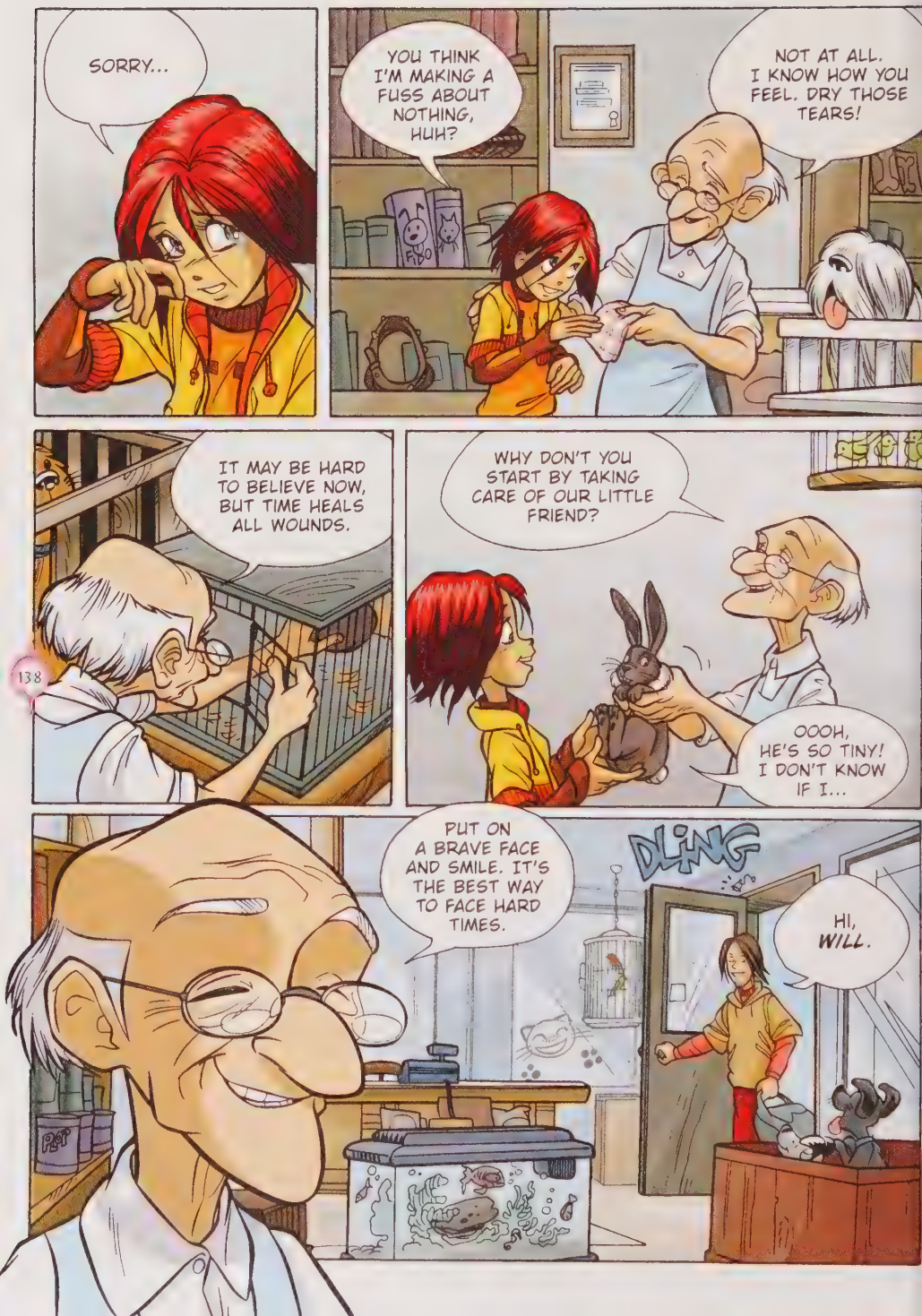
THAT SAME AFTERNOON...
DIN DON
THIS IS GIRLIE STUFF!
ONE MORE WORD, AND I'M TELLING MOM.
IRMA, CHRISTOPHER! WELCOME.
JENNY, DON'T RUN IN THE HALLWAY!
NO, GEORGE. YOU CAN'T TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES AND GIVE YOUR SOCKS TO JENNY!
DID YOU BRING MY PRESENT?
LILIAN!
TYPICAL GIRL.
CHRISTO-PHER!
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, LILIAN.


COME ON IN. THE BIRTHDAY CAKE IS WAITING FOR US.
YEEEEEL
HI, IRMA. HI, CHRISTOPHER...
CORNELIA, PLEASE GO TO THE LIVING ROOM AND GET KIMBERLY OUT OF THE PIANO. I'LL CHECK ON THE CAKE.
ARE YOU ENJOYING MY PARTY?
I'M TELLING YOU, I'M NOT PLAYING "MRS. SMITH HAS TEATIME" OR ANY JUNK LIKE THAT.
I'M NOT A LITTLE GIRL!
HEY, YOU REALLY BROUGHT ME A PRESENT!

COME HERE, YOU LITTLE MONSTER!
NO, I WANNA PLAY THE PIANO!
SBRANG
WOW!
CORNELIA, LOOK WHAT CHRISTOPHER GOT ME!
IT'S BEAUTIFUL!
HOW TO BE A WITCH
!
MY MOM GOT IT. SHE SAYS THERE'S A BIT OF MAGIC IN EVERY GIRL...
I THINK GIRLS ARE JUST STUPID...
HA-HA-HA!
DO YOU THINK...?
NO, THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
LET'S GO TO MY ROOM. THEY'LL LEAVE US IN PEACE THERE...

FOR A MINUTE, I THOUGHT WE'D BEEN FOUND OUT...
NAH!
MY MOM'S OBSESSED ABOUT KIDS BEING MAGICAL AND WHATNOT...
I SEE YOU'RE PACKING FOR REDSTONE.
YEAH... REDSTONE. WE'LL BE APART FOR A WHILE.
I WISH I COULD GO TOO. EVEN THOUGH I'LL BE HERE WITH WILL...

SHOP
YOU ATE ALL THOSE SEEDS? YOU GREEDY BOYS! YOU TOO?! YOU'RE SUCH GLUTTONS.
HI, BUDDY. YOU'RE SO CUTE! YOU REMIND ME OF MY DORMOUSE...
I MISS HIM SO MUCH, YOU KNOW.
EVERYTHING SUCKS. MY DORMOUSE IS GONE, MY FRIENDS ARE LEAVING, AND I'LL BE ALL ALONE.
UM... -:COUGH:- DID YOU SAY SOMETHING, WILL?


SORRY...
YOU THINK I'M MAKING A FUSS ABOUT NOTHING, HUH?
NOT AT ALL. I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL. DRY THOSE TEARS!
IT MAY BE HARD TO BELIEVE NOW, BUT TIME HEALS ALL WOUNDS.
WHY DON'T YOU START BY TAKING CARE OF OUR LITTLE FRIEND?
OOOH, HE'S SO TINY! I DON'T KNOW IF I...
PUT ON A BRAVE FACE AND SMILE. IT'S THE BEST WAY TO FACE HARD TIMES.
DLING
HI, WILL.

PULL, PULL, THE DOOR IS TRICKY...
FALL, FALL, FIND A PIGGY...
A VIOLET IS BLOOMING; A ZEPHYR IS WHISPERING. FLY, FLY ALONG WITH MY WISHES!
N-NOW WHAT?
HMM... I DON'T GET IT. IT SAYS TO DO IT THIS WAY.
BUT IT ALSO SAYS IT MIGHT NOT WORK THE FIRST TIME.
OKAY...NOW CAN I PUT YOUR DOLL DOWN?

IT'S YOUR FAULT! YOU KEEP MOVING. LET'S TRY AGAIN.
OOF...
PULL, PULL, THE DOOR IS TRICKY. FALL, FALL, FIND A PIGGY...
A VIOLET IS BLOOMING...
I'LL TELL MOM YOU PULLED MY HAIR! I'LL TELL IRMA TOO!
=GULP=
DIN DON
IT WORKED! DID YOU SEE? IT WORKED!
NO FAIR! THAT WASN'T THE DOORBELL SPELL!

HI, MRS. HALE!
C'MON IN, GIRLS. CORNELIA IS IN HER ROOM WITH IRMA.
GIVE IT BACK! IT'S MY MAGIC WAND!
THE DOOR IS TRICKY, AND LILIAN IS A PIGGY!
WHAT'S GOING ON, KIDS?!
BUT, MOOOOOOM!
GO BACK IN WITH THE OTHERS! I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANOTHER WORD!
AREN'T ALL KIDS SUPPOSED TO BE GOOD?
MAYBE ROASTED...

WELCOME TO CHEZ CORNELIA, HOME OF THE VAINEST GIRL IN THE WORLD!
HMM...
WOW, I DIDN'T KNOW WARDROBES COULD EXPLODE!
LISTEN TO GOLD TEETH HERE! DIDJA HAVE A SARCASM ATTACK?
WHAT? YOU THOUGHT YOU HAD EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS?
HEY, UNBELIEVABLE!
LOOK WHAT I FOUND.
IT'S MY SHEPHERDESS WIG!
SHEPHERDESS? WHAT KIND OF SHEPHERDS DO YOU HAVE AROUND HERE?

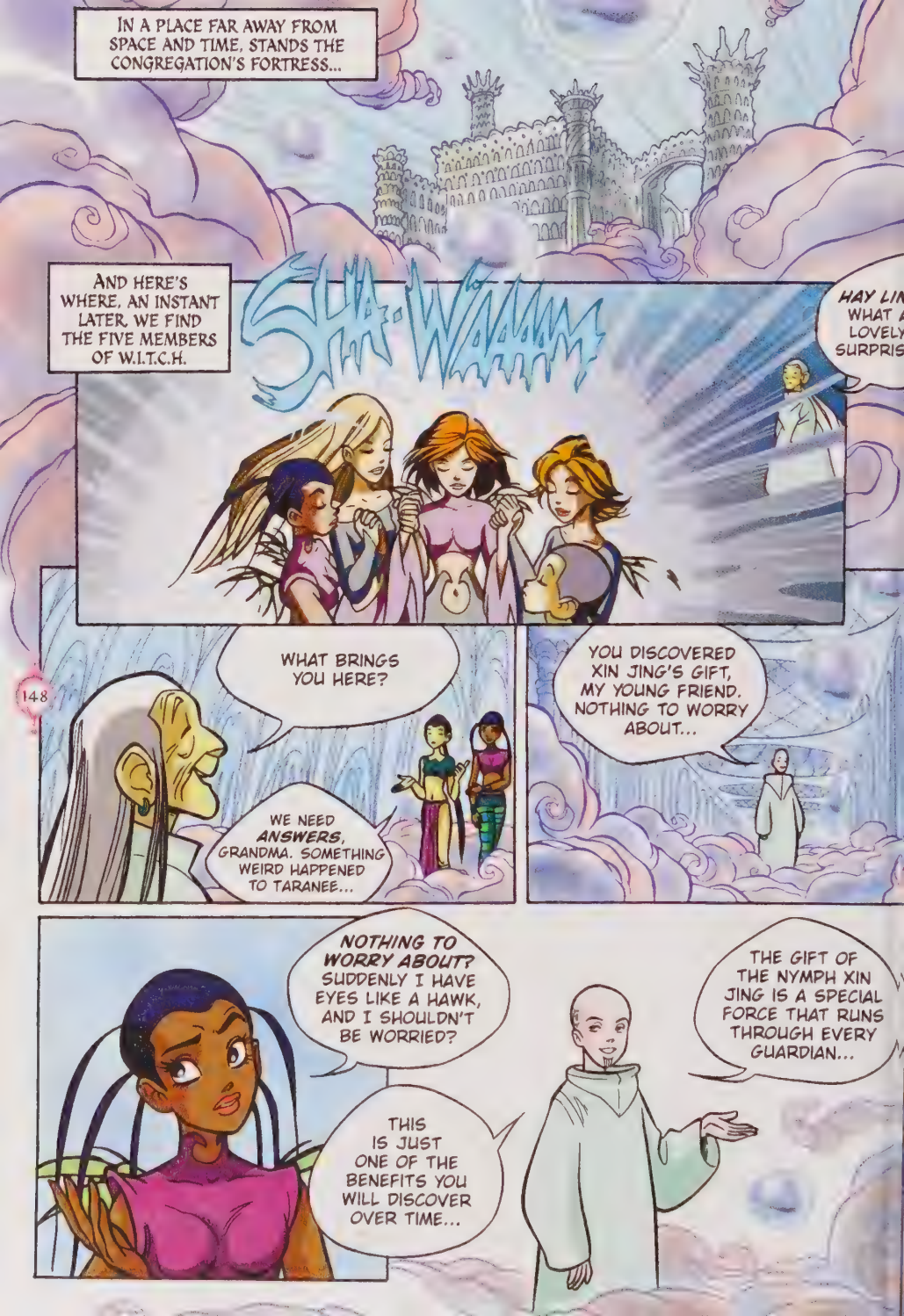
TA-DAAAA!
YOU LOOK GORGEOUS! WITH THE RIGHT PERFUME, YOU'LL BE IRRESISTIBLE.
IF CALEB HAD SEEN YOU IN THIS, MAYBE HE WOULDN'T HAVE CHANGED HIS MIND.
EAU de FLEUR
OUCH!
HAY LIN!
SORRY, CORNELIA, I DIDN'T MEAN...
IT'S OKAY...
FALLING IN LOVE IS NOTHIN' BUT TROUBLE. LOOK AT ME. I DON'T LIKE ANYONE, AND I'M DOIN' GREAT!
YEAH...AND WHY DON'T YOU LIKE ANYONE?
MAYBE YOU'RE SCARED?
ME? SCARED? OF WHAT?

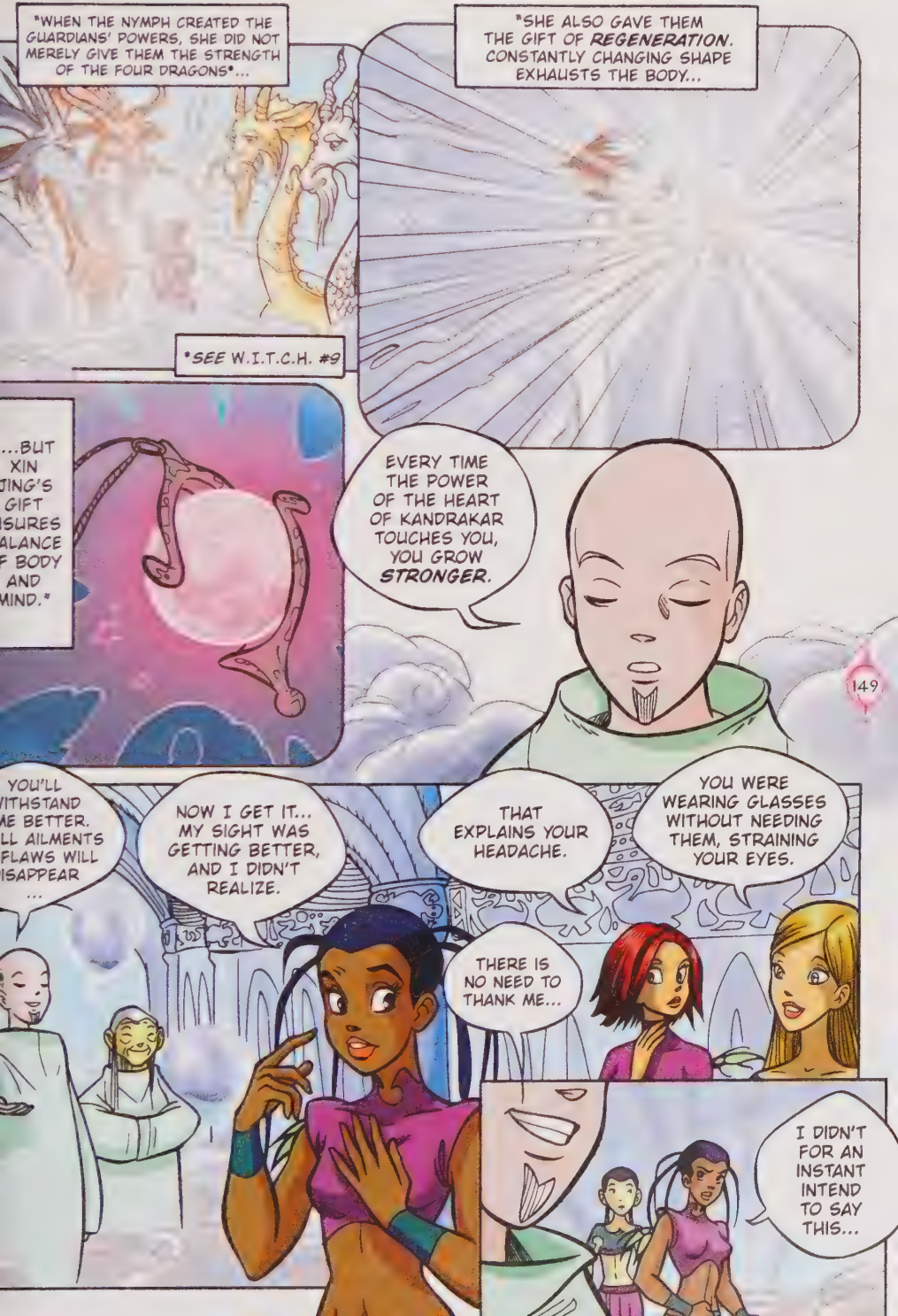
BUT LET'S TALK ABOUT YOU. YOU'RE LEAVING ME AND WILL HERE...
...AND NIGEL!
I HOPE ERIC WILL CALL ME SOMETIME...
NAPOLEON, COME BACK!
FFFFT!
SLAM
GET OUT OF HERE! CAN'T I GET ANY PRIVACY IN THIS HOUSE?
I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR SECRETS! I'VE GOT IMPORTANT STUFF TO THINK ABOUT!
KEEP IT DOWN! MY HEAD IS EXPLODING...
HEADACHE? I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT! I CAN MAKE IT GO AWAY IN A SEC!
SIGH!
OOF! YOU NEVER LET ME PLAY WITH YOU.
WHY DON'T YOU GO AWAY INSTEAD?
YOU SHOULDN'T TREAT HER LIKE THAT, CORNY.

DON'T WORRY, LILIAN. LET'S SEE IF YOUR SPELL WORKS.
COME INTO MY ROOM. IT'S NICE AND QUIET THERE.
SIT DOWN. TAKE OFF YOUR GLASSES AND FOCUS. I'LL READ THE MAGIC SPELL!
SO... "MAKE WATER AND WOO INTO A BROTH, THEN CLIMB AND TOSS IT OFF THE ROOF...
"QUICK AND QUICKER, CROSS YOUR FINGERS.
"MAKE A NICE HAT AGAINST THE RAIN, AND THEN YOU START ALL OVER AGAIN!"
HUP!
MROW!

STUMP
NO, KITTY!
CRAK
LILIAN! LOOK WHAT NAPOLEON DID!
OOOH! I'M SO SORRY, TARANEE. I DIDN'T MEAN TO!
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, LILIAN. I SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT THEM THERE.
YOU DIDN'T FINISH YOUR SPELL. "AND JUST WHEN YOU THINK YOU'RE ALL DONE...
"...AND EVERYONE IS HAVING FUN / ADD A PIECE OR TWO OF CANDY / LET THE PARTY BEGIN AND DANCE WITH THE LADY!"

TARANEE... CAN YOU READ FROM THAT FAR AWAY?
I...I...
SEE? I TOLD YOU. IT WORKED!
I'M A WITCH! I'M A WITCH!
I CAN SEE EVEN WITHOUT MY GLASSES!
IT'S INCREDIBLE. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN SHORT-SIGHTED!
I REFUSE TO BELIEVE LILIAN DID IT. WHAT REALLY HAPPENED?
DON'T OK AT ME. N KNOW AS MUCH AS I DO...
I SMELL THE ORACLE. SHOULD WE POP OVER TO KANDRAKAR?
JUST FOR A FEW MINUTES. NOBODY WILL NOTICE WE'RE GONE.


IN A PLACE FAR AWAY FROM SPACE AND TIME, STANDS THE CONGREGATION'S FORTRESS...
AND HERE'S WHERE, AN INSTANT LATER, WE FIND THE FIVE MEMBERS OF W.I.T.C.H.
SHA-WAAM!
HAY LIN WHAT A LOVELY SURPRIS
WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
WE NEED ANSWERS, GRANDMA. SOMETHING WEIRD HAPPENED TO TARANEE...
YOU DISCOVERED XIN JING'S GIFT, MY YOUNG FRIEND. NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT...
NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT? SUDDENLY I HAVE EYES LIKE A HAWK, AND I SHOULDN'T BE WORRIED?
THIS IS JUST ONE OF THE BENEFITS YOU WILL DISCOVER OVER TIME...
THE GIFT OF THE NYMPH XIN JING IS A SPECIAL FORCE THAT RUNS THROUGH EVERY GUARDIAN...


"WHEN THE NYMPH CREATED THE GUARDIANS' POWERS, SHE DID NOT MERELY GIVE THEM THE STRENGTH OF THE FOUR DRAGONS*...
"SHE ALSO GAVE THEM THE GIFT OF REGENERATION. CONSTANTLY CHANGING SHAPE EXHAUSTS THE BODY...
*SEE W.I.T.C.H. #9
...BUT XIN JING'S GIFT ISURES ALANCE F BODY AND MIND."
EVERY TIME THE POWER OF THE HEART OF KANDRAKAR TOUCHES YOU, YOU GROW STRONGER.
149
YOU'LL ITHSTAND ME BETTER. LL AILMENTS FLAWS WILL ISAPPEAR ...
NOW I GET IT... MY SIGHT WAS GETTING BETTER, AND I DIDN'T REALIZE.
THAT EXPLAINS YOUR HEADACHE.
YOU WERE WEARING GLASSES WITHOUT NEEDING THEM, STRAINING YOUR EYES.
THERE IS NO NEED TO THANK ME...
I DIDN'T FOR AN INSTANT INTEND TO SAY THIS...

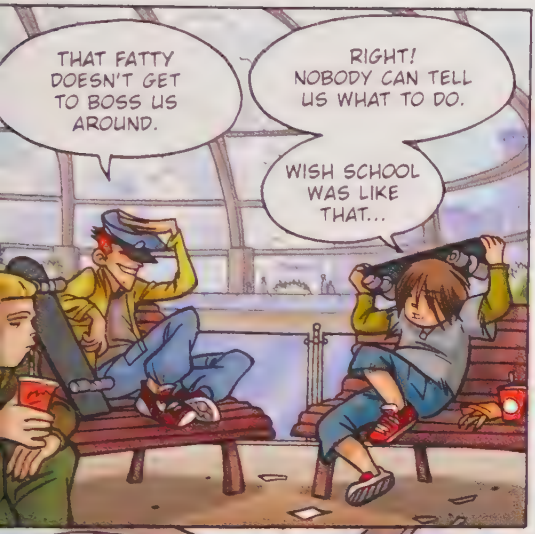
...BUT HOW COULD YOU? HOW COULD YOU HIDE YET ANOTHER TRUTH FROM US?
COME ON, TARANEE... IT'S NOT SO BAD!
THIS IS TOTALLY CHANGING US, IRMA. IT'S MAKING US EVEN FREAKIER THAN WE ALREADY ARE.
AN UNWANTED GIFT CAN BE REJECTED.
THAT'S WHAT I'M GOING TO DO. I WANT TO GO BACK TO MY USUAL SELF! GLASSES, NEAR-SIGHTEDNESS, AND ALL!
WITH XIN JING'S GIFT, THE HONORABLE YAN LIN HAS SERVED KANDRAKAR FOR A LONG TIME...LONGER THAN ANY MORTAL COULD HAVE.
NOTHING TO SAY? ARE YOU OKAY WITH THIS?
I'D LIKE TO THINK ABOUT IT, TARANEE.
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR, KANDRAKAR IS NOT MY WHOLE LIFE!
WHAT'S THERE TO THINK ABOUT? WHEN WILL WE BE FREE TO CHOOSE?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

SINCE ALL THIS STARTED, WE'VE ALWAYS DONE WHAT YOU WANTED.
WE WERE CALLED TO FIGHT MERIDIAN'S THREAT, AND WE DID IT...
THEN NERISSA WOKE UP, AND WE FOUGHT HER...BUT I KEEP FEELING LIKE A PUPPET IN YOUR HANDS!
I HAVE EXPLAINED THAT YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS ARE AN INSTRUMENT OF BALANCE...
I'VE HEARD THIS BEFORE. THERE'S NOTHING SINISTER IN KANDRAKAR'S ACTIONS...
SIR, I DON'T KNOW WHAT MY FRIENDS THINK, BUT I'M GIVING OFFICIAL NOTICE THAT I'M SICK OF IT.
TARANEE!
HEAR ME OUT. AS LONG AS THERE ARE SECRETS, I WON'T LIFT A FINGER FOR ANYONE OR ANYTHING.
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, FROM NOW ON, I'M OUT OF THE GROUP. I'M ON A BREAK.

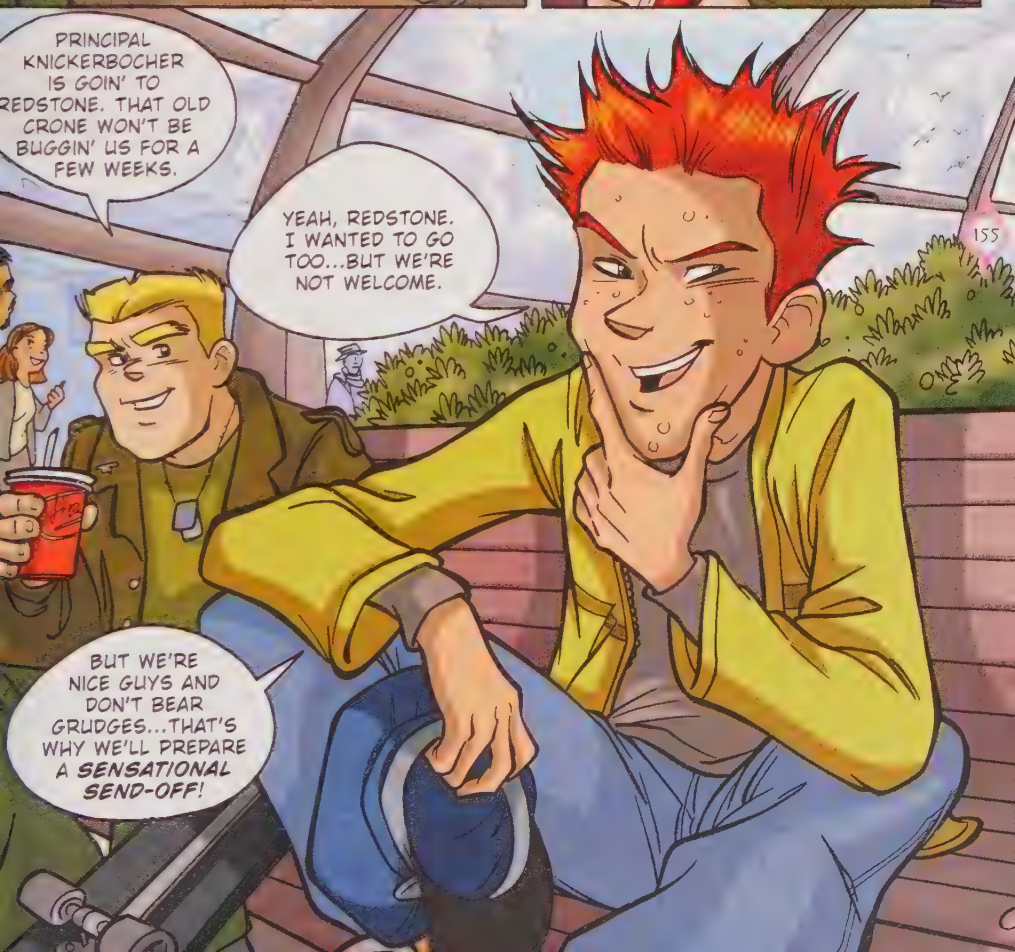
YOU ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THIS, TARANEE. DO NOT BE RASH. CONSIDER YOUR ACTIONS.
I WILL. NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND, SIR, I JUST WANT TO...
SHA-WAAM
...GO HOME!
CRIPES, TARANEE. THEM'S FIGHTING WORDS! WERE YOU SERIOUS?
YOU'LL MANAGE WITHOUT ME—AND DON'T MAKE THAT FACE. IT'S NOT FOREVER.
I JUST WANT THE ORACLE TO STOP TREATING US LIKE CHILDREN. IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME WE'VE ASKED HIM.
BUT TODAY YOU WERE MORE DIRECT THAN I EVER WAS. YOU WERE BRAVE!
XIN JING'S GIFT...THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW!
WHY DIDN'T THEY GIVE US AN INSTRUCTION MANUAL WITH THE WINGS AND COSTUMES?
YEAH... BEING A W.I.T.C.H. ISN'T EASY. THAT GETS CLEARER EVERY DAY.

MEANWHILE, AT RALPH SYLLA'S HOUSE...
NO, SIR. I DIDN'T MEAN TO DISAPPOINT YOU. I'M DOING MY BEST...
I DON'T THINK SO. YOU'VE GOT NOTHING.
IT'S HARDER THAN I THOUGHT, AND NOW THIS TRIP TO REDSTONE...THE GIRLS WILL SPLIT UP, FURTHER COMPLICATING THINGS.
I won't be able to follow them there. I'm not part of the trip.
YES YOU ARE. I'VE ALREADY SORTED IT OUT. YOU JUST HAVE TO GET ON THAT PLANE.
153
We want information! Proof! You have to try harder. You care about your career, don't you?
OF COURSE I CARE...
Click

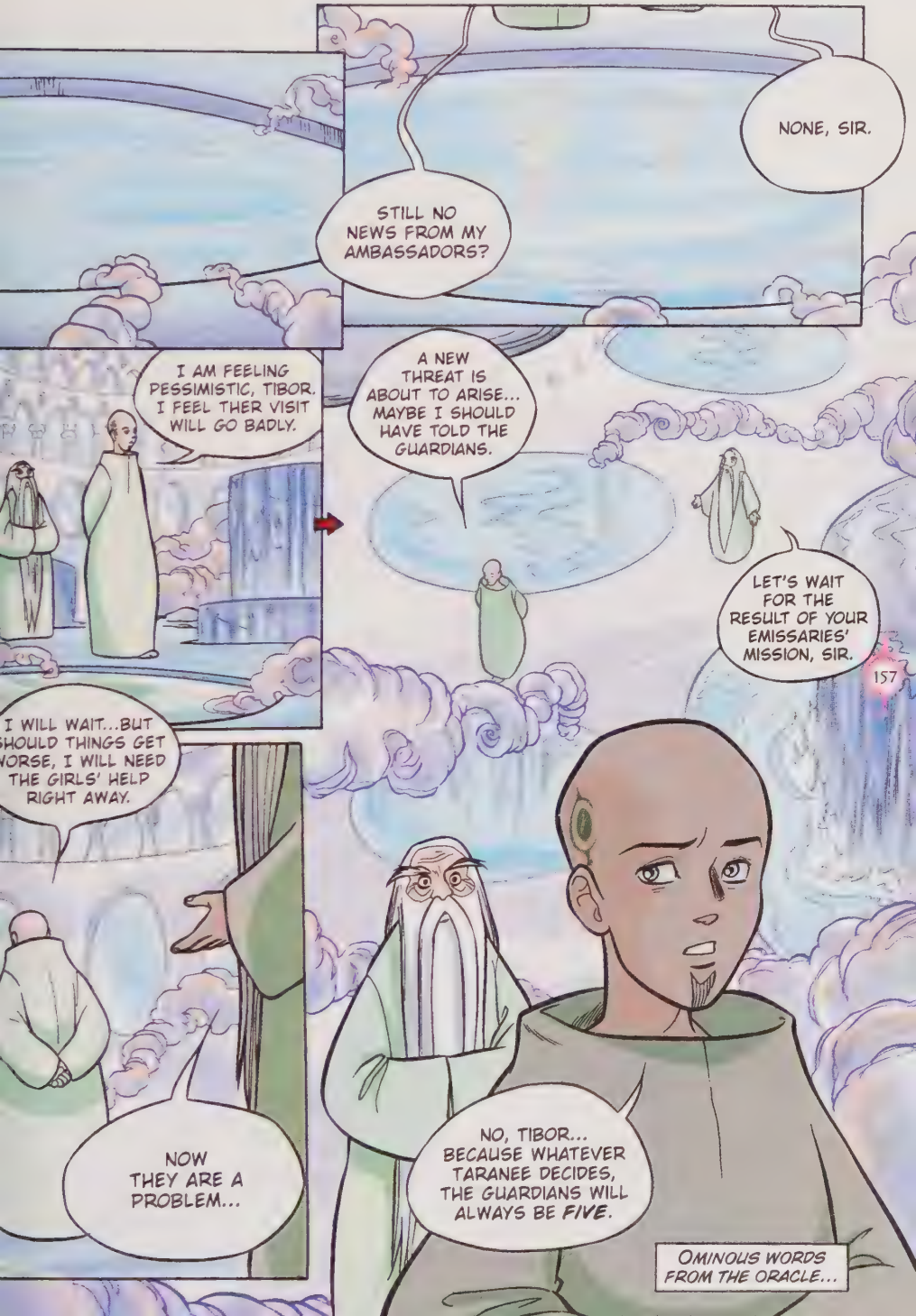
HEATHERDOME.
HEATHERFIELD'S SHOPPING MALL.
WHOO-HOO!
COMPUTER OUTLET
WATCH
SURF
OUTTA MY WAY!
HEY!
THUP
THE OUGHTA BE FUN. THE SHERIFF'S COMIN'!
I ALREADY TOLD YOU, KIDS. GET THOSE SKATEBOARDS OUT OF HERE!
GOT IT! I WIN A TROPHY!
HA HA
KIDS, PLEASE...


THAT FATTY DOESN'T GET TO BOSS US AROUND.
RIGHT! NOBODY CAN TELL US WHAT TO DO.
WISH SCHOOL WAS LIKE THAT...

BUT WE CAN HAVE FUN FOR A WHILE.


PRINCIPAL KNICKERBOCHER IS GOIN' TO REDSTONE. THAT OLD CRONE WON'T BE BUGGIN' US FOR A FEW WEEKS.
YEAH, REDSTONE. I WANTED TO GO TOO...BUT WE'RE NOT WELCOME.
BUT WE'RE NICE GUYS AND DON'T BEAR GRUDGES...THAT'S WHY WE'LL PREPARE A SENSATIONAL SEND-OFF!

HOW DID YOU BREAK THEM?
IT JUST HAPPENED, MOM. DON'T WORRY. I'VE GOT A SPARE PAIR.
TRUE. OFF TO BED NOW. WE CAN GET YOU PACKED TOMORROW.
GOOD NIGHT.
GOOD NIGHT, TARANEE.
A SPARE PAIR...
HERE WE GO. A SIMPLE PIECE OF GLASS WILL KEEP UP APPEARANCES.

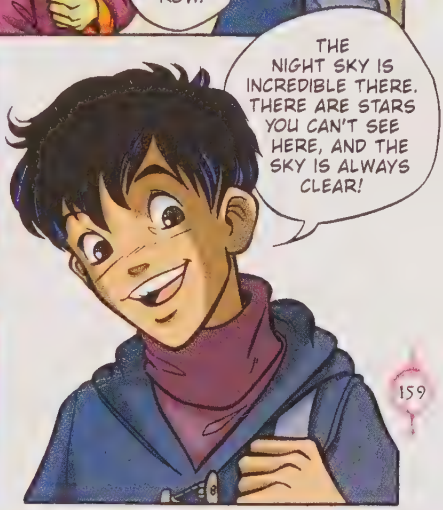

NONE, SIR.
STILL NO NEWS FROM MY AMBASSADORS?
I AM FEELING PESSIMISTIC, TIBOR. I FEEL THER VISIT WILL GO BADLY.
A NEW THREAT IS ABOUT TO ARISE... MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE TOLD THE GUARDIANS.
LET'S WAIT FOR THE RESULT OF YOUR EMISSARIES' MISSION, SIR.
I WILL WAIT...BUT SHOULD THINGS GET WORSE, I WILL NEED THE GIRLS' HELP RIGHT AWAY.
NOW THEY ARE A PROBLEM...
NO, TIBOR... BECAUSE WHATEVER TARANEE DECIDES, THE GUARDIANS WILL ALWAYS BE *FIVE*.
OMINOUS WORDS FROM THE ORACLE...

THE NEXT DAY AT SCHOOL...
ONE-PIECE OR BIKINI?
BIKINI! I WANT TO TAN EVERY AVAILABLE INCH.
DON'T GET A SUNBURN!
YOU'RE JEALOUS!
ME? NOOO...! JUST CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR HEALTH.
THE SEA... THE SUN... BOYS PLAYING VOLLEYBALL... SUNGLASSES... WHY SHOULD I CARE?
LOOK AT WHAT YOU'RE LEAVING BEHIND!
NEVER MIND...
AH! AH! AH!
GO AHEAD. I'LL CATCH UP WITH YOU!

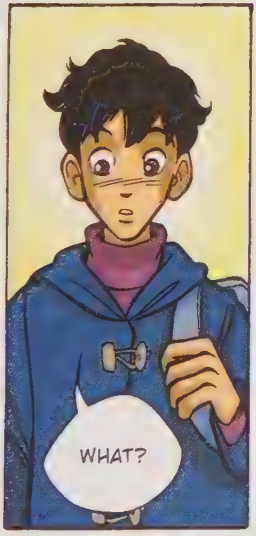
HMM...I THINK THERE'S SOMEONE SHE'LL BE SORRY NOT TO SEE FOR A WHILE!

SO... IT'S NEARLY TIME...
YES, TOMOR-ROW.

WRITE ME, OKAY?
I PROMISE!


THE NIGHT SKY IS INCREDIBLE THERE. THERE ARE STARS YOU CAN'T SEE HERE, AND THE SKY IS ALWAYS CLEAR!

I wish you were coming too.

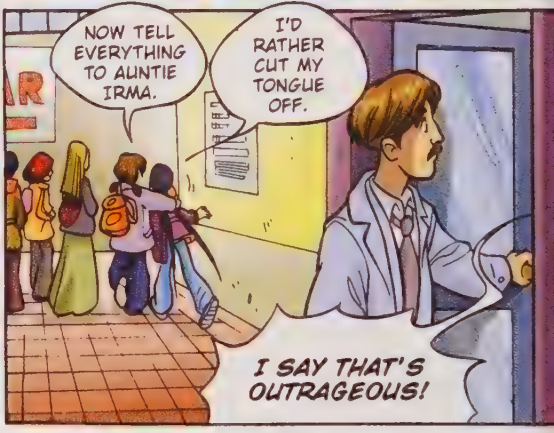

WHAT?

I MEAN... THE STARS! IT'D BE COOL IF YOU COULD POINT OUT THE CONSTELLATIONS...

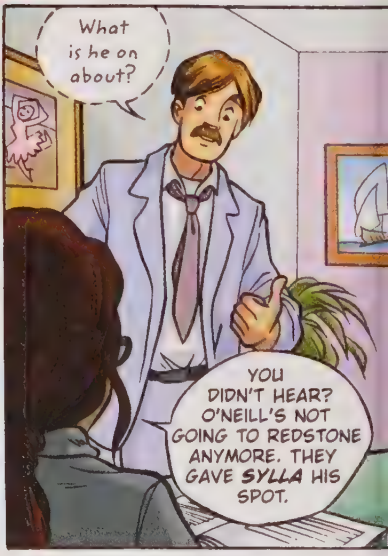
OH, THE BELL. WE HAVE TO GO.
DRIIIIIIIIII

HAVE A SAFE TRIP!

AHA! SO IT'S KISSES NOW!
DROP IT!


NOW TELL EVERYTHING TO AUNTIE IRMA.
I'D RATHER CUT MY TONGUE OFF.
I SAY THAT'S OUTRAGEOUS!

WHAT'S THE MATTER, O'NEILL?
SUCK-UPS. THE ONES WHO KNOW ALL THE SHORTCUTS AND TRAMPLE OVER EVERYONE!


What is he on about?
YOU DIDN'T HEAR? O'NEILL'S NOT GOING TO REDSTONE ANYMORE. THEY GAVE SYLLA HIS SPOT.

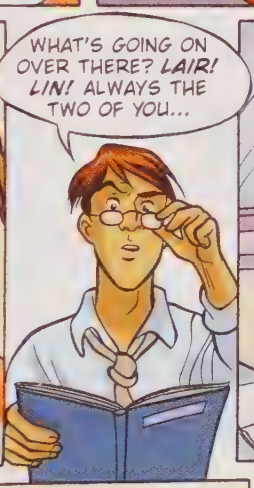
THE COMPUTER SCIENCE TEACHER! I DON'T LIKE THAT PUNK!
HE ONLY JUST GOT HERE. HE HAS NEITHER EXPERIENCE NOR SENIORITY. NOTHING QUALIFIES HIM FOR THIS TRIP...
THAT'S WHAT I TOLD THE PRINCIPAL, AND YOU KNOW WHAT SHE SAID? THAT SHE TOTALLY AGREED!
FANCY THAT...
SOMEONE FROM THE BOARD CHANGED THE LIST TO SLIP HIS NAME IN! BUT I SWEAR THIS ISN'T OVER!
DON'T BE MAD. MAYBE THE PRINCIPAL HAS AN IMPORTANT JOB FOR YOU, LIKE RUNNING THE INSTITUTE WHILE SHE'S AWAY.
GRRNN ...
SBAM
!
?
WAS IT SOMETHING I SAID?
COLLINS... LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE ALWAYS THE LAST ONE TO KNOW.

I'M TELLING YOU AND EVERY OTHER CLASS. FROM TOMORROW, MR. HORSEBERG WILL BE IN CHARGE...
IT'S JUST FOR A FEW WEEKS, AND I'M SURE HE'LL DO A GREAT JOB.
Look how happy he is. He can't wait to start bossing people around.
I'LL LEAVE YOU TO YOUR CLASS NOW. BE GOOD, KIDS!
THANK YOU, PRINCIPAL.
WE SHOULD MOVE AHEAD...BUT I THINK WE'LL HAVE AN ORAL QUIZ INSTEAD. NOW, WHO FIRST...?
SO...I COULD START FROM THE BEGINNING. OR THE END. OR MAYBE THE MIDDLE...
GUARDIANS...
THE ORACLE IS CALLING YOU...
Irma! Did you hear that?

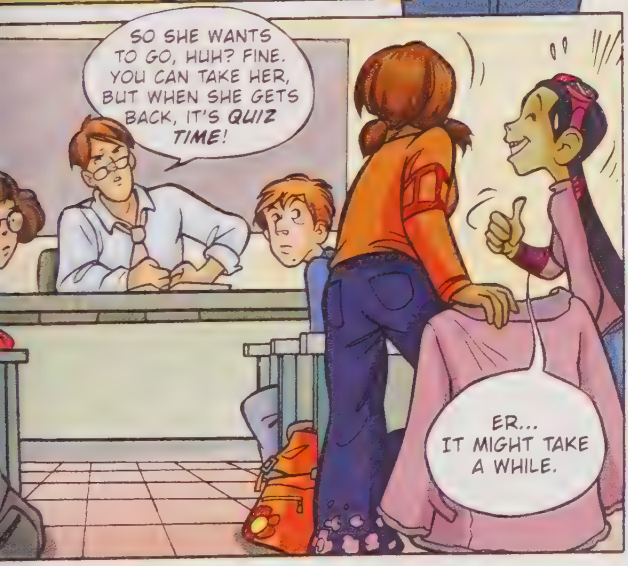
It was the Oracle's voice...in my head!
It's a telepathic message from Kandrakar. They're looking for us.

We have to talk with the others. Maybe they heard it too.
Let's go. It might be something serious!

You're not coming, Taranee?
I'm staying here. I'm not going to discuss it.

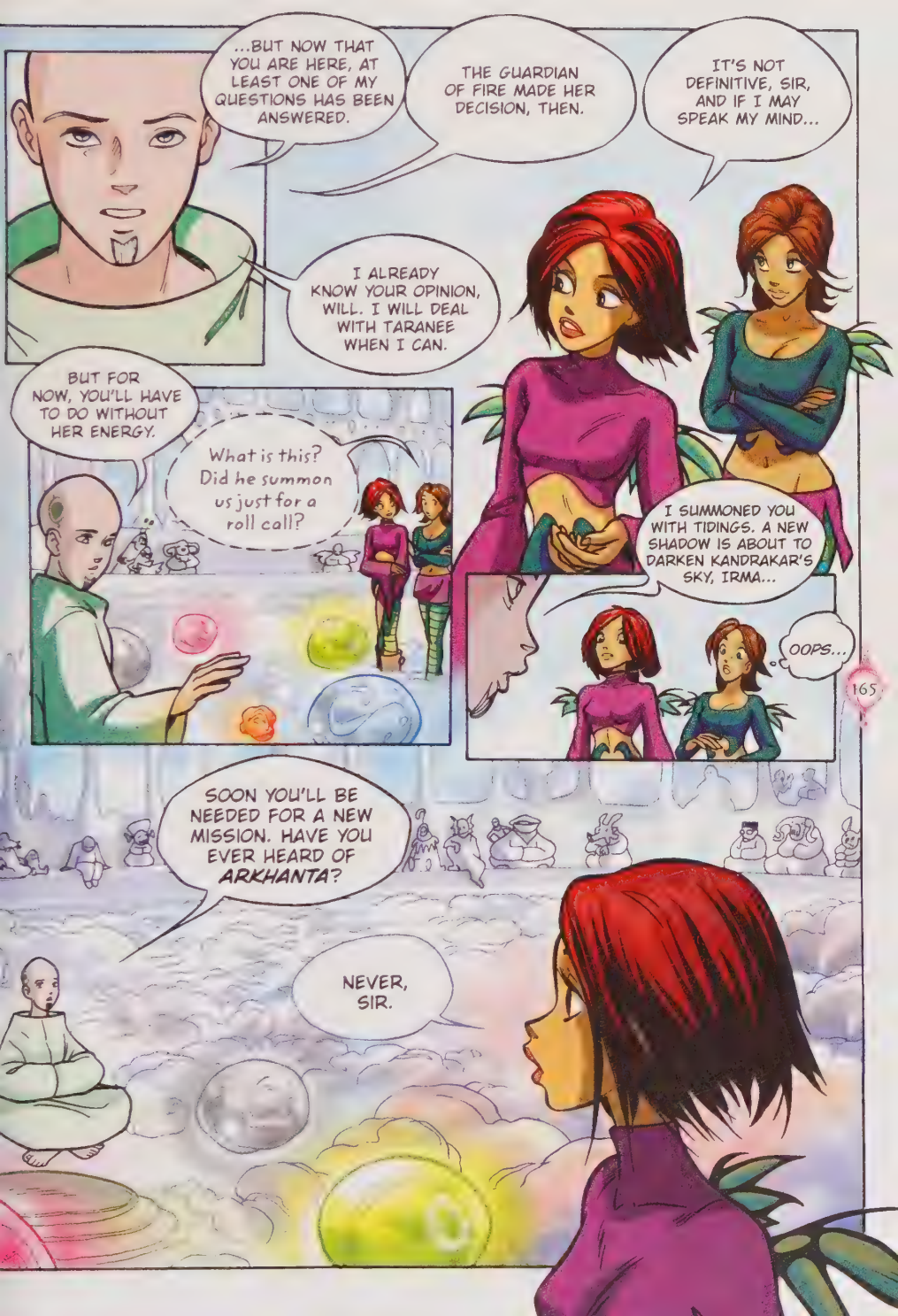

WHAT'S GOING ON OVER THERE? LAIR! LIN! ALWAYS THE TWO OF YOU...

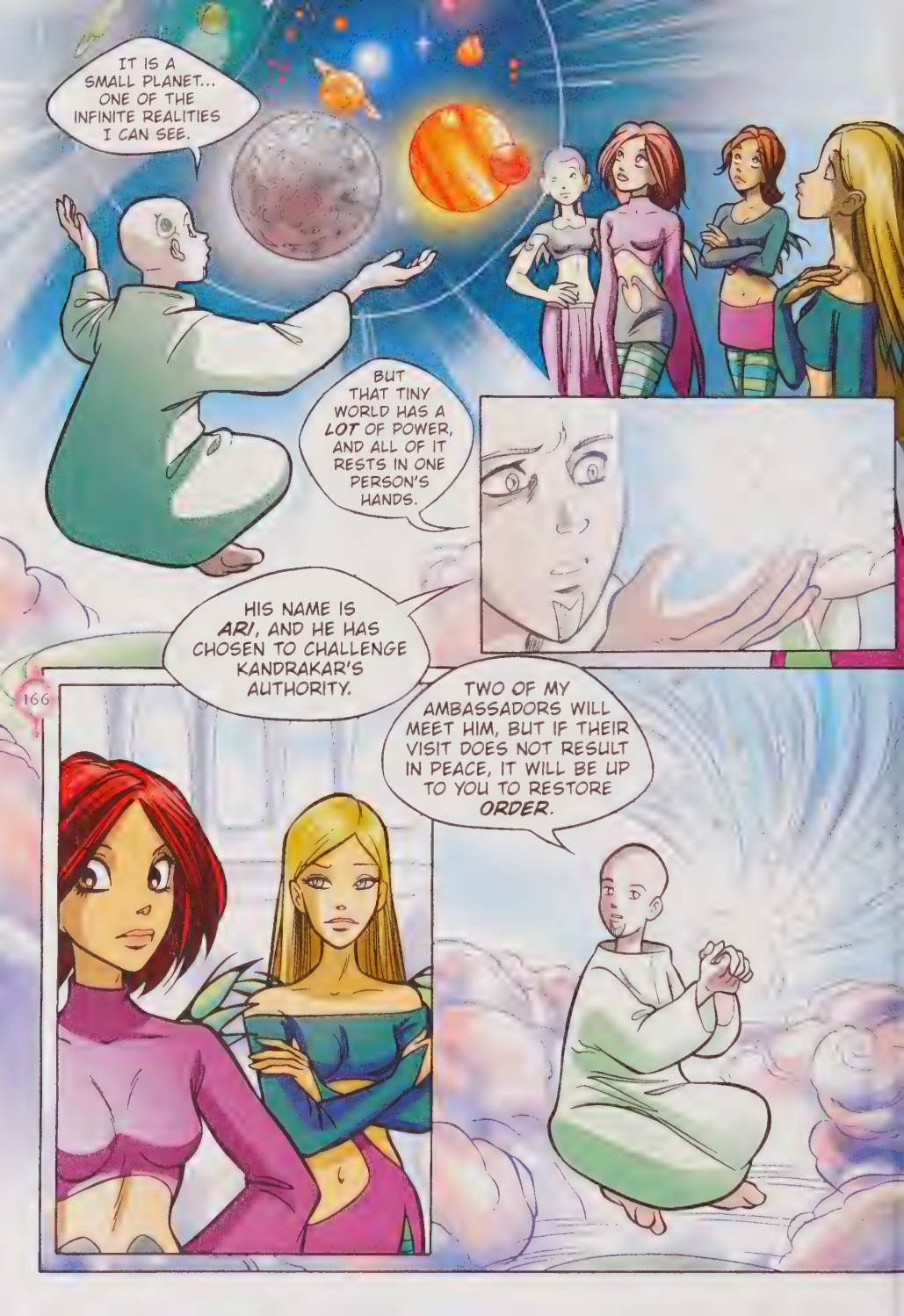
UM... IRMA ISN'T FEELING TOO WELL, SO...

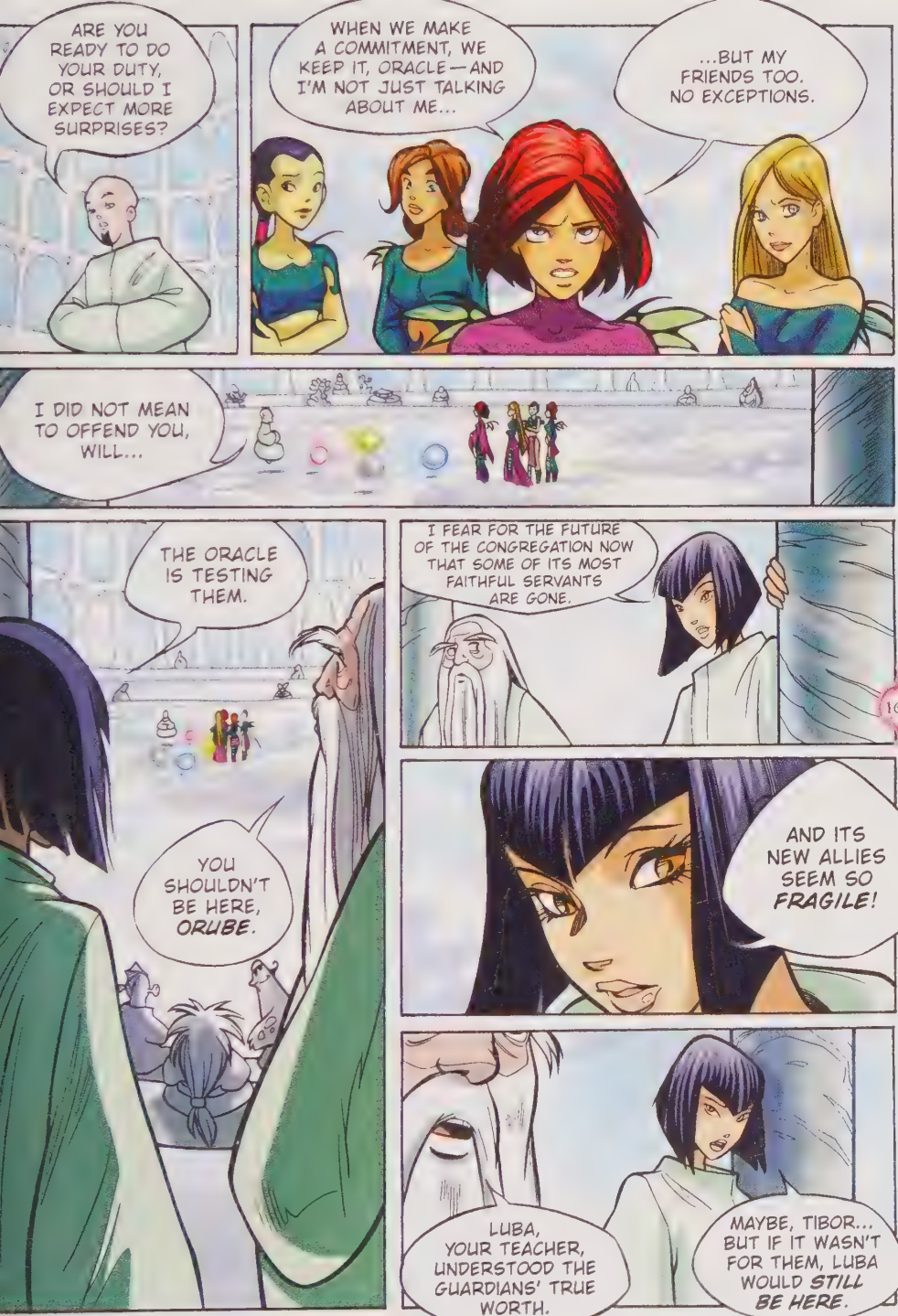

SO SHE WANTS TO GO, HUH? FINE. YOU CAN TAKE HER, BUT WHEN SHE GETS BACK, IT'S QUIZ TIME!
ER... IT MIGHT TAKE A WHILE.

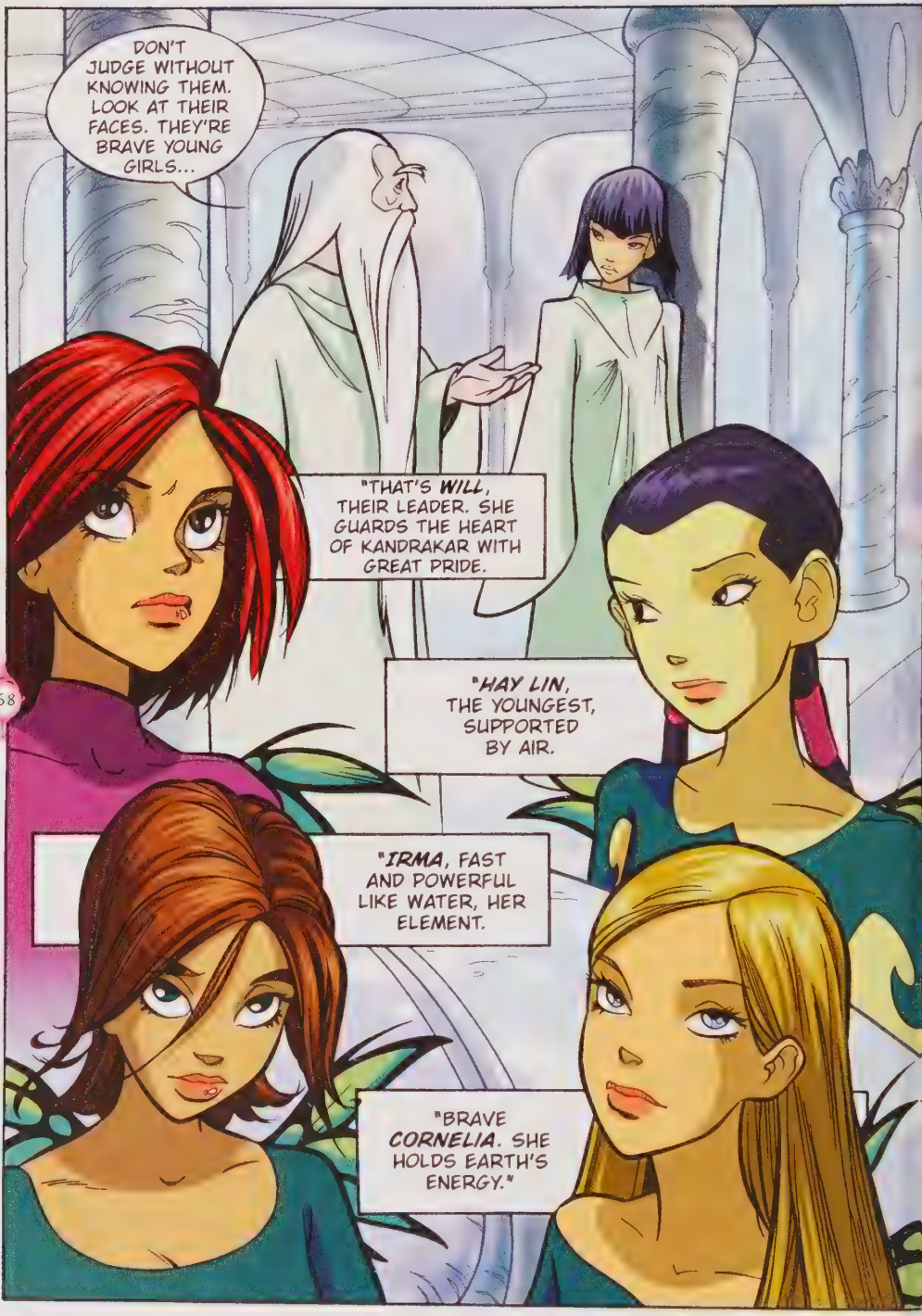
SURE! THEN AFTER MISS LAIR, IT'LL BE YOUR TURN. YOU DON'T GET AWAY THAT EASILY!

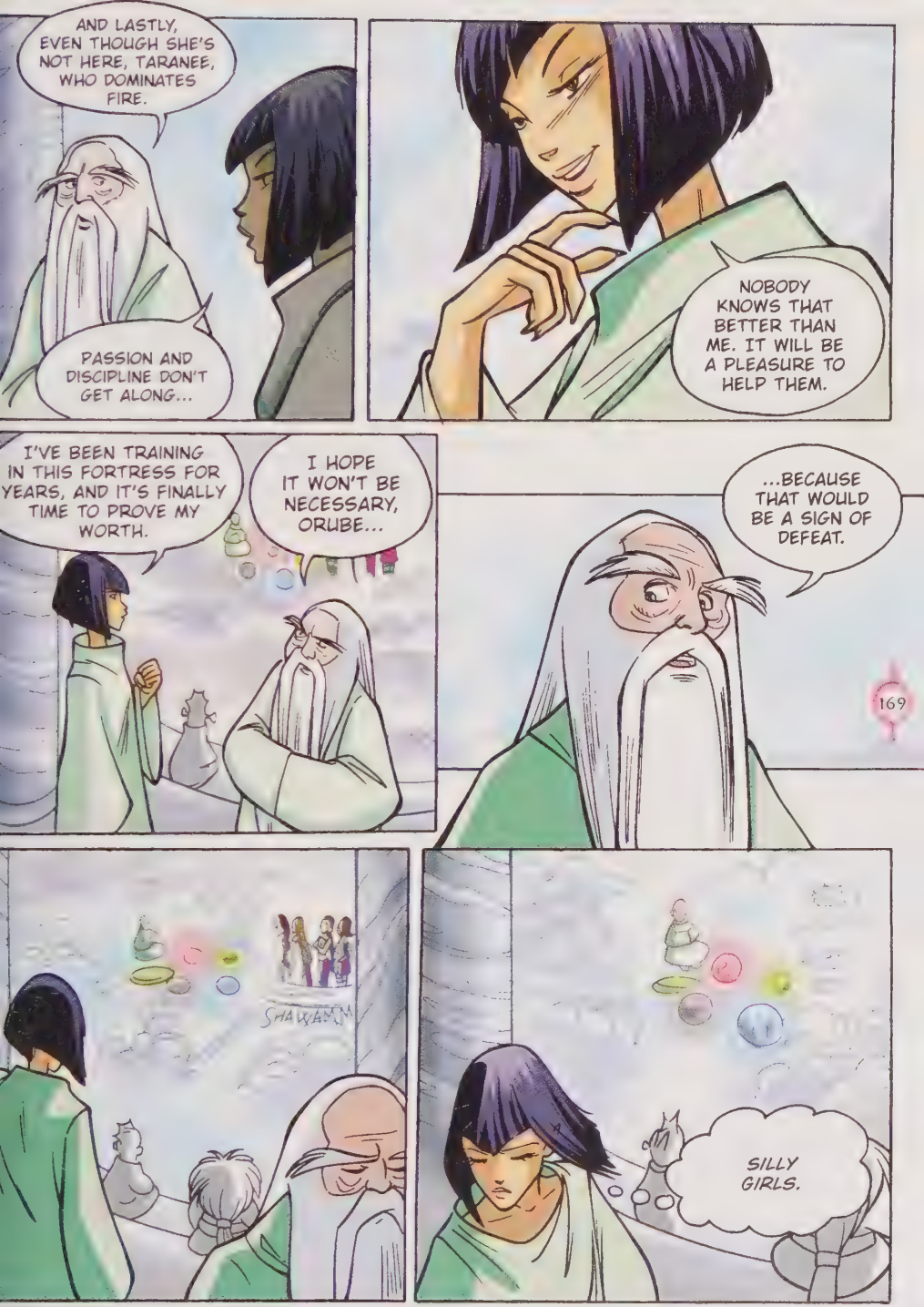
FOR THE ORACLE'S SAKE, I HOPE THIS IS IMPORTANT.
LOOK. WILL AND CORNELIA ARE COMING.
DID YOU HEAR IT TOO?
WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? LET'S FIND A QUIET SPOT AND GO TO KANDRAKAR.
UH... ISN'T THERE ANYWHERE MORE "ROMANTIC" ?
NOW'S NO TIME TO BE PICKY.
TARANEE'S ON STRIKE?
INDEED.
"AND AFTER YESTERDAY, I DON'T THINK THE ORACLE WILL BE SURPRISED."
WE'RE HERE, SIR. WHY'D YOU CALL US?
I NEED TO TALK TO YOU, GUARDIANS...


...BUT NOW THAT YOU ARE HERE, AT LEAST ONE OF MY QUESTIONS HAS BEEN ANSWERED.
THE GUARDIAN OF FIRE MADE HER DECISION, THEN.
IT'S NOT DEFINITIVE, SIR, AND IF I MAY SPEAK MY MIND...
I ALREADY KNOW YOUR OPINION, WILL. I WILL DEAL WITH TARANEE WHEN I CAN.
BUT FOR NOW, YOU'LL HAVE TO DO WITHOUT HER ENERGY.
What is this? Did he summon us just for a roll call?
I SUMMONED YOU WITH TIDINGS. A NEW SHADOW IS ABOUT TO DARKEN KANDRAKAR'S SKY, IRMA...
OOPS...
SOON YOU'LL BE NEEDED FOR A NEW MISSION. HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF ARKHANTA?
NEVER, SIR.


IT IS A SMALL PLANET... ONE OF THE INFINITE REALITIES I CAN SEE.
BUT THAT TINY WORLD HAS A LOT OF POWER, AND ALL OF IT RESTS IN ONE PERSON'S HANDS.
HIS NAME IS ARI, AND HE HAS CHOSEN TO CHALLENGE KANDRAKAR'S AUTHORITY.
TWO OF MY AMBASSADORS WILL MEET HIM, BUT IF THEIR VISIT DOES NOT RESULT IN PEACE, IT WILL BE UP TO YOU TO RESTORE ORDER.


ARE YOU READY TO DO YOUR DUTY, OR SHOULD I EXPECT MORE SURPRISES?
WHEN WE MAKE A COMMITMENT, WE KEEP IT, ORACLE—AND I'M NOT JUST TALKING ABOUT ME...
...BUT MY FRIENDS TOO. NO EXCEPTIONS.
I DID NOT MEAN TO OFFEND YOU, WILL...
THE ORACLE IS TESTING THEM.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE, ORUBE.
I FEAR FOR THE FUTURE OF THE CONGREGATION NOW THAT SOME OF ITS MOST FAITHFUL SERVANTS ARE GONE.
AND ITS NEW ALLIES SEEM SO FRAGILE!
LUBA, YOUR TEACHER, UNDERSTOOD THE GUARDIANS' TRUE WORTH.
MAYBE, TIBOR... BUT IF IT WASN'T FOR THEM, LUBA WOULD STILL BE HERE.

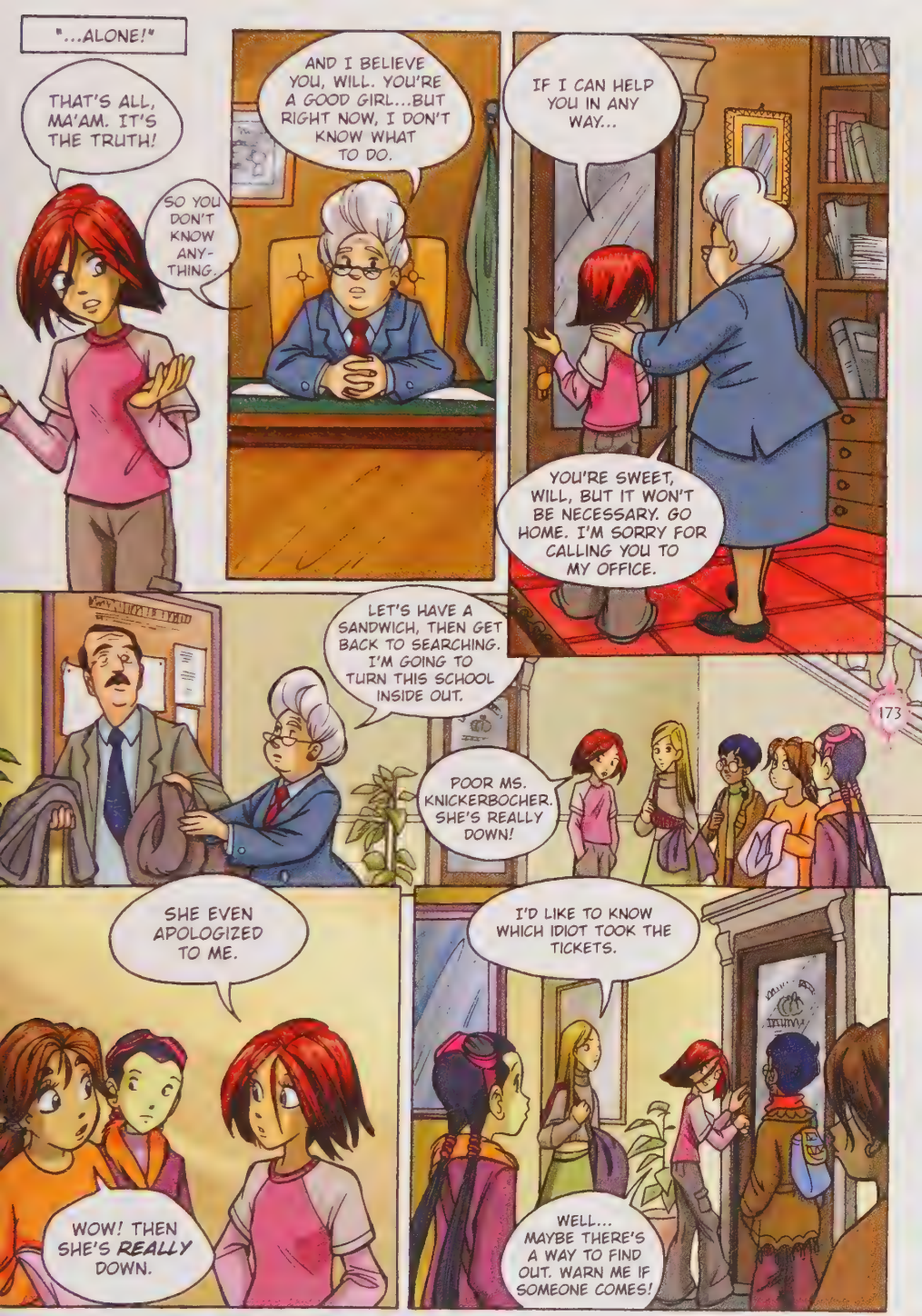

DON'T JUDGE WITHOUT KNOWING THEM. LOOK AT THEIR FACES. THEY'RE BRAVE YOUNG GIRLS...
"THAT'S WILL, THEIR LEADER. SHE GUARDS THE HEART OF KANDRAKAR WITH GREAT PRIDE.
"HAY LIN, THE YOUNGEST, SUPPORTED BY AIR.
"IRMA, FAST AND POWERFUL LIKE WATER, HER ELEMENT.
"BRAVE CORNELIA. SHE HOLDS EARTH'S ENERGY."


AND LASTLY, EVEN THOUGH SHE'S NOT HERE, TARANEE, WHO DOMINATES FIRE.
PASSION AND DISCIPLINE DON'T GET ALONG...
NOBODY KNOWS THAT BETTER THAN ME. IT WILL BE A PLEASURE TO HELP THEM.
I'VE BEEN TRAINING IN THIS FORTRESS FOR YEARS, AND IT'S FINALLY TIME TO PROVE MY WORTH.
I HOPE IT WON'T BE NECESSARY, ORUBE...
...BECAUSE THAT WOULD BE A SIGN OF DEFEAT.
169
SHAWAAM
SILLY GIRLS.

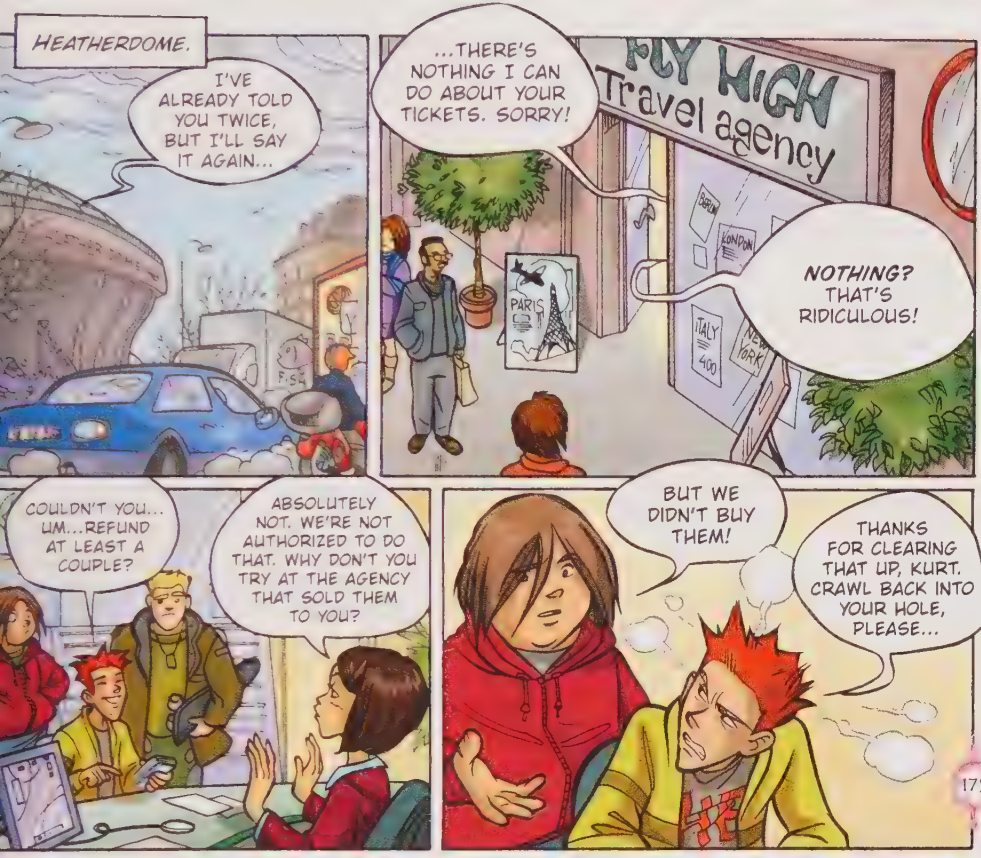
NOT AGAIN! I'D NEVER HEARD OF ARKHANTA, AND I WAS JUST FINE...
WE MADE A COMMITMENT, IRMA. IF YOU WANT TO BACK OUT, YOU'RE FREE TO. BESIDES...
BESIDES WHAT? ONE MORE OR LESS MAKES NO DIFFERENCE? TARANEE DIDN'T BACK OUT IF THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN.
I DIDN'T SAY THAT. YOU'RE PUTTING WORDS IN MY MOUTH.
LISTEN, THERE'S NO NEED TO ARGUE. I'M SURE TARANEE WILL COME BACK SOONER OR LATER.
AND WHY WORRY ABOUT ARKHANTA BEFORE WE HAVE TO?
LET'S GO. SEE YOU OUTSIDE AFTER CLASSES.
I LOVE EASTERN WISDOM!
HAY LIN'S OPTIMISM DOESN'T CHANGE ANYTHING, AND WE LEAVE TOMORROW.
DON'T WORRY.
?
I THINK WE'LL MANAGE TO STICK TOGETHER.
WE WON'T SPLIT UP. TRUST ME!

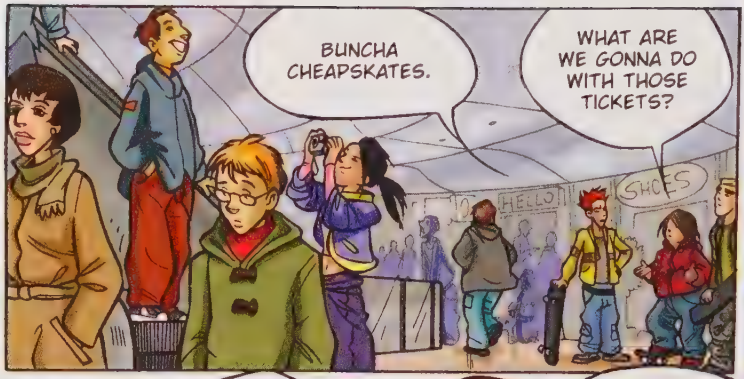
THE SCHOOL DAY CRAWLS ON BETWEEN TESTS AND QUIZZES...
ONE MINUTE AFTER THE NEXT, THE CLOCK TICKS TOWARD THE LAST HOUR...
...BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ITS HONORED CAREER, THE BELL DOESN'T RING!
OOF! THEY DON'T WANT US TO GO HOME TODAY.
WHAT'S GOING ON?
HE ANSWER IES BEHIND THIS DOOR.
IT'S OUTRAGEOUS! UNACCEPTABLE! INTOLERABLE!
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PLANE TICKETS? BEFORE RECESS, THEY WERE IN THIS DRAWER...
...BUT NOW THEY'RE GONE! WITHOUT THEM, WE'LL BE STRANDED TOMORROW... AND WE CAN FORGET ABOUT REDSTONE!
IT SEEMS OBVIOUS, PRINCIPAL. SOMEONE STOLE THEM!

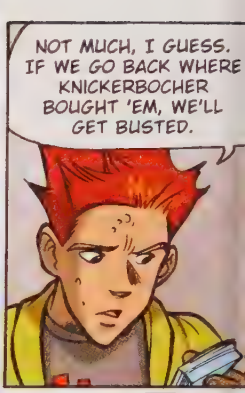
THIS IS TOO MUCH. NOBODY IS LEAVING THE SCHOOL UNTIL I GET MY TICKETS BACK.
UMM... YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T DO THAT, MS. KNICKER-BOCHER.
CRIPES... OF COURSE I KNOW. BUT I HAVE NO CHOICE. THE SCHOOL CAN'T AFFORD TO BUY NEW TICKETS.
IT'S O'NEILL'S REVENGE. IF HE'S NOT GOING, NOBODY'S GOING.
O'NEILL? DON'T BE SILLY, MS. WHARTON. IT CAN'T BE HIM.
THEN WHO?
I THINK WE'LL MANAGE TO STICK TOGETHER. WE WON'T SPLIT UP. TRUST ME!
MA'AM, I DON'T KNOW IF I SHOULD SAY IT, BUT... I HEARD SOMETHING... BUT I DON'T WANT TO BE A SNEAK!
THEN SAY IT IN MY EAR SO NOBODY ELSE WILL HEAR YOU.
IT WAS JUST A FEW WORDS, BUT... PSSST...PSST... PSST...
I'D LIKE TO TALK TO WILL VANDOM, PLEASE. RIGHT NOW!

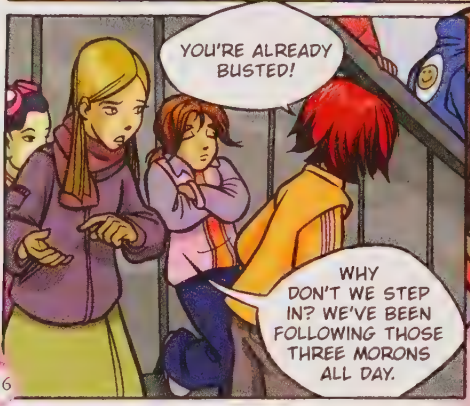

"...ALONE!"
THAT'S ALL, MA'AM. IT'S THE TRUTH!
SO YOU DON'T KNOW ANY-THING.
AND I BELIEVE YOU, WILL. YOU'RE A GOOD GIRL...BUT RIGHT NOW, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
IF I CAN HELP YOU IN ANY WAY...
YOU'RE SWEET, WILL, BUT IT WON'T BE NECESSARY. GO HOME. I'M SORRY FOR CALLING YOU TO MY OFFICE.
LET'S HAVE A SANDWICH, THEN GET BACK TO SEARCHING. I'M GOING TO TURN THIS SCHOOL INSIDE OUT.
POOR MS. KNICKERBOCHER. SHE'S REALLY DOWN!
SHE EVEN APOLOGIZED TO ME.
WOW! THEN SHE'S *REALLY* DOWN.
I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHICH IDIOT TOOK THE TICKETS.
WELL... MAYBE THERE'S A WAY TO FIND OUT. WARN ME IF SOMEONE COMES!

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
JUST SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE WHOLE THING...
...AND MAYBE YOU CAN HELP. CAN YOU HEAR ME?
I may be an antique, but I'm not deaf yet!
I JUST NEED SOME INFO. DID YOU SEE ANYONE RUMMAGING THROUGH THE DESK? SOMEONE WHO WASN'T THE PRINCIPAL?
I SURE DID! I would've zapped him if I could've!
That little punk! He stole the tickets, and he was laughing!
"If we sell them, we'll get a ton of money," he said!
CAN YOU TELL ME WHO IT WAS?
Of course. He spends so much time in here, he's an old friend!
Do you know URIAH DUNN?
!

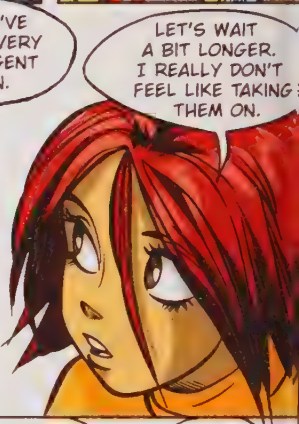

HEATHERDOME.
I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU TWICE, BUT I'LL SAY IT AGAIN...
...THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT YOUR TICKETS. SORRY!
FLY HIGH Travel agency
PARIS
LONDON
ITALY 400
NEW YORK
NOTHING? THAT'S RIDICULOUS!
COULDN'T YOU... UM...REFUND AT LEAST A COUPLE?
ABSOLUTELY NOT. WE'RE NOT AUTHORIZED TO DO THAT. WHY DON'T YOU TRY AT THE AGENCY THAT SOLD THEM TO YOU?
BUT WE DIDN'T BUY THEM!
THANKS FOR CLEARING THAT UP, KURT. CRAWL BACK INTO YOUR HOLE, PLEASE...
LISTEN, I DON'T KNOW WHERE THESE TICKETS CAME FROM, BUT IF YOU WANT MY ADVICE...
...I WOULD HAVE ASKED FOR IT!
LET'S GET OUTTA HERE, GUYS. THEY'RE USELESS.


BUNCHA CHEAPSKATES.
WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO WITH THOSE TICKETS?
SHOES


NOT MUCH, I GUESS. IF WE GO BACK WHERE KNICKERBOCHER BOUGHT 'EM, WE'LL GET BUSTED.


YOU'RE ALREADY BUSTED!
WHY DON'T WE STEP IN? WE'VE BEEN FOLLOWING THOSE THREE MORONS ALL DAY.

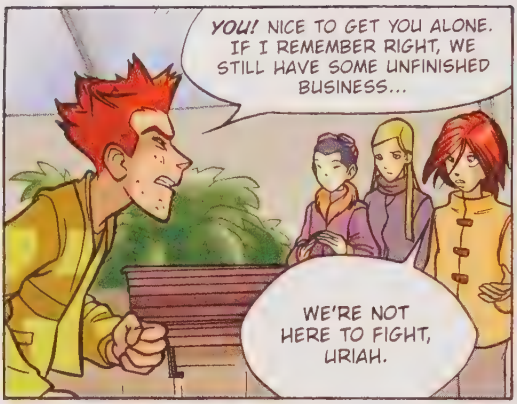
YEAH. WE'VE BEEN TO EVERY TRAVEL AGENT IN TOWN.

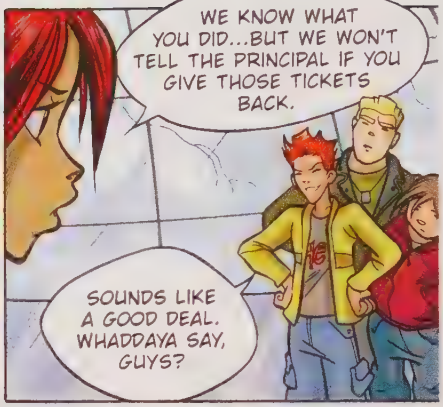

LET'S WAIT A BIT LONGER. I REALLY DON'T FEEL LIKE TAKING THEM ON.

THEY MIGHT TOSS THE TICKETS IN THE TRASH, AND WE'LL GET THEM BACK THE EASY WAY.
WHAT IF THEY MAKE THEM INTO PAPER PLANES?

WHY WOULD THEY DO THAT?
BECAUSE THEY ALREADY ARE. LOOK!

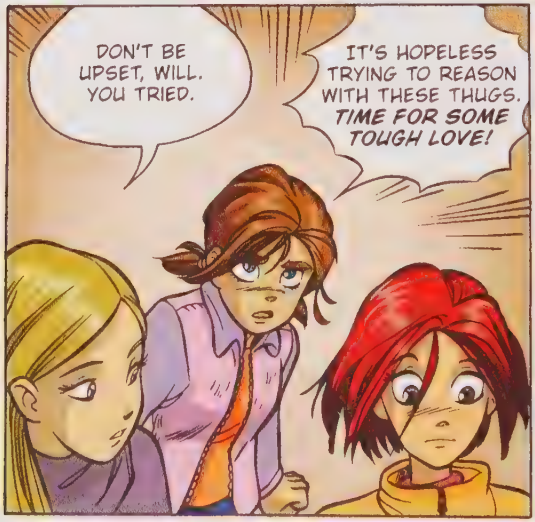
LET'S SEE WHERE OUR DEAR PRINCIPAL'S DREAM LANDS! LAY YOUR BETS!
FLIP
HEH-HEH! I THINK IT'LL END UP IN THE FOUNTAIN.
I BET IT HITS THAT FATTY'S HAT!
AND I THINK IT WILL LAND SAFELY...
FWOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO
!
FLAP
...RIGHT HERE!


YOU! NICE TO GET YOU ALONE. IF I REMEMBER RIGHT, WE STILL HAVE SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS...
WE'RE NOT HERE TO FIGHT, URIAH.


WE KNOW WHAT YOU DID...BUT WE WON'T TELL THE PRINCIPAL IF YOU GIVE THOSE TICKETS BACK.
SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD DEAL. WHADDAYA SAY, GUYS?

HUH... SOUNDS GOOD TO ME.
I WASN'T SERIOUS, IDIOT! THE ANSWER'S OBVIOUSLY NO!

IF YOU WANT 'EM, COME GET 'EM!
URIAH!


DON'T BE UPSET, WILL. YOU TRIED.
IT'S HOPELESS TRYING TO REASON WITH THESE THUGS. TIME FOR SOME TOUGH LOVE!

HEY, IRMA, YOU'RE ALMOST SCARING ME.
COME ON, THEY'RE GETTING AWAY...

THEY HAVEN'T GOTTEN FAR. WANNA TAKE CARE OF IT, CORNELIA?
GLADLY! BUT I'M NOT GOING TO DIRTY MY HANDS WITH THOSE GUYS...
THE FLOOR WILL SLOW THEIR SKATEBOARDS DOWN.
KKWIIIIINA
HUH?
BLORELGEL
YEOW!
URGH!
AH!
KRUMP
179
WOW! WE WERE GOIN' SO FAST THE FLOOR MELTED!
MY BOARD'S GLUED TO THE GROUND. IT WON'T COME OFF!
WE'LL DEAL WITH IT LATER. NOW RUN! THOSE WITCHES ARE COMING!

SUCH A HURRY...
BZINK
!
KRASH
OUFF!
FUNK
URGH!
HEY! WHY DID YOU TAKE THAT FIRE EXTINGUISHER?
BUT...IT WASN'T US!
YOU'RE ALONE, URIAH. JUST QUIT AND GIVE US THOSE TICKETS!
THE TICKETS?
I'D RATHER BURN 'EM!
NO, URIAH! DON'T!

LISTEN TO HER, URIAH. YOU SHOULDN'T PLAY WITH FIRE!
FWOOOM!
AH!
AN! WHAT IE HECK DO OU WANT?
PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER. YOU HAVE SOMEONE TO VISIT!
WE JUST WANT TO SPARE YOU SOME TROUBLE, URIAH.
SOMEONE? WHO?
DLINDLON
Knickerbocher
YES?
MS. KN-KNICKER-BOCHER? I FOUND SOMETHING YOU MIGHT NEED...

THE NEXT DAY. IT'S TIME TO GO.
CAN I COME IN?
TOK TOK
COME IN, COME IN...
ARE YOU STILL PACKING? TARANEE, YOU LEAVE IN TWO HOURS!
I'M JUST CHECKING. I DON'T WANT TO FORGET ANYTHING.
YOU'VE REPACKED THREE TIMES, AND YOUR CLOTHES ARE ALL CREASED. I DON'T HAVE TIME TO IRON THEM!
I DIDN'T ASK YOU TO. HAVEN'T YOU GOT ANYTHING BETTER TO DO?
DON'T TAKE THAT TONE WITH ME, MISSY.
SORRY, MOM, I'M WOUND UP ABOUT THE TRIP. IT'S SUCH A LONG FLIGHT...
OH, TARANEE... THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. IT'LL BE FINE. YOU'LL SEE.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE THE WORRIED ONE?
AND I STILL AM...BUT NOW I HAVE A DAUGHTER TO REASSURE! YOU'LL HAVE FUN AND SEE SOME BEAUTIFUL PLACES.
TARANEE... YOU HAVE A VISITOR.
MAY I?
NIGEL! SHOULDN'T YOU BE AT SCHOOL?
THAT'S WHAT I WAS THINKING.
WHAT A SURPRISE!
UM...WHY DON'T YOU COME WITH ME, MOM?
THESE ARE FOR YOU...AS A GOOD-BYE.
THANK YOU, NIGEL. THEY'RE BEAUTIFUL!
I...I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU...

"...COME BACK SOON!"
Car Park
Telephones
ARE WE ALL HERE? WHO'S MISSING?
HALE ISN'T HERE YET, MS. KNICKERBOCHER.
TRAVEL
I'M HERE!
WHERE'S YOUR LUGGAGE?
IT'S ALREADY CHECKED IN. ARE YOU MOVING THERE?
HA-HA! HERE'S YOUR TICKET.
WE HAVE TO THANK OUR VERY OWN URIAH DUNN. IT'S THANKS TO HIM WE'RE STILL GOING TODAY. HE CLEVERLY GOT THE TICKETS BACK FOR US.
EVEN THOUGH I ADMIT I DIDN'T QUITE UNDERSTAND HOW! ANYWAY, WE SHOULD BUY HIM A SOUVENIR. THAT BOY'S NOT SO BAD AFTER ALL.
QUICK, DAD. I HAVE TO CHECK IN!
QUICK, DAD! HURRY, DAD! IT'S NOT MY FAULT WE'RE ALWAYS LATE!

WORK HARD AND BE GOOD, OKAY?
AND CALL US IF YOU NEED ANYTHING.
DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH MONEY?
YES, PAPA. DON'T WORRY. I'LL BE FINE.
HERE WE GO, THEN...
TRY NOT TO GET INTO TROUBLE.
HOW COULD WE? YOU'RE STAYING HOME!
HA-HA-HA!
CORNELIA...
THANK YOU, LILIAN. YOU'RE VERY SWEET...
TAKE THIS. YOU'LL NEED SOME MAGIC NOW THAT YOU'RE ALL ALONE WITHOUT MY HELP.

PRACTICE A LOT, OKAY? IT'S NOT EASY TO BE A GOOD WITCH!
I KNOW, LILIAN. I KNOW...
WELL, GOOD LUCK.
DON'T BE SAD! WE'LL BE BACK IN A FEW WEEKS.

THE PLANE LEAVES FOR REDSTONE. A NEW ADVENTURE BEGINS.
END OF CHAPTER 27

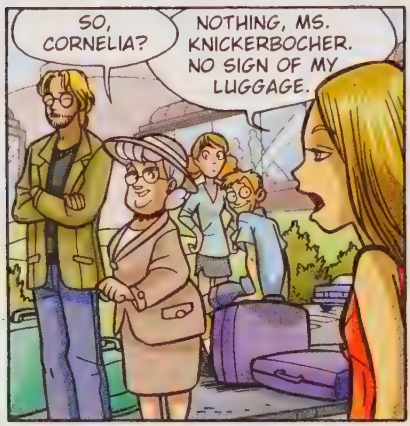
Witch
Will
Irma
Taranee
Cornelia
Hay Lin

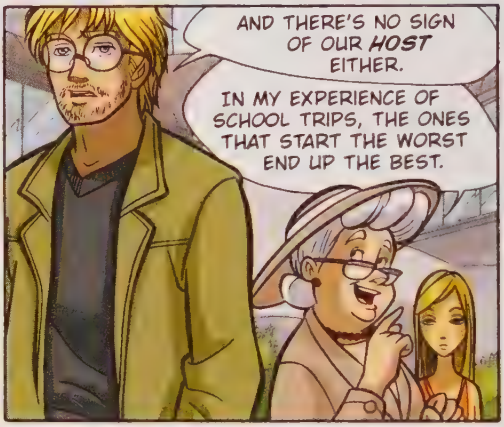
28

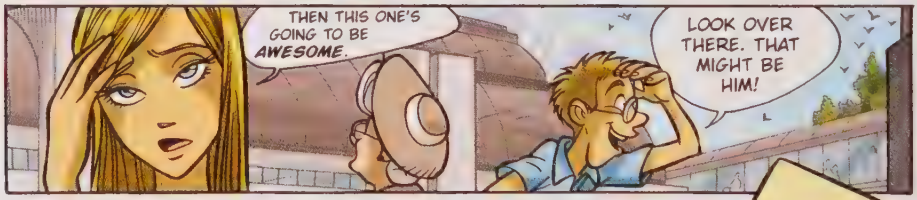
So Near, Yet So Far
"Something inside Ari broke.
He became a different person."

YOU CAN RUN. YOU CAN HIDE. YOU CAN EVEN FLY TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD, BUT IT'S USELESS.
WHEN BAD LUCK IS LOOKING FOR YOU, IT ALWAYS KNOWS WHERE TO FIND YOU.
LOST? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
IT MEANS MISPLACED, GONE, ENDED UP WHO KNOWS WHERE.
BUT IT'S MY SUITCASE! ALL MY CLOTHES ARE IN THERE!
I'M SO SORRY, MISS HALE. IT HAPPENS. BUT YOU'LL SEE — WE'LL FIND IT IN A FEW DAYS.
AND WE'LL DELIVER IT TO REDSTONE COLLEGE.
WRITE DOWN THE ADDRESS AND DON'T GET IT WRONG. MY FRIEND ISN'T THE FORGIVING KIND.
ER... WELCOME TO PORT NELSON!

DON'T WORRY. WE'LL LEND YOU SOMETHING.
THANK YOU, BUT I'M STILL HOPPING MAD!

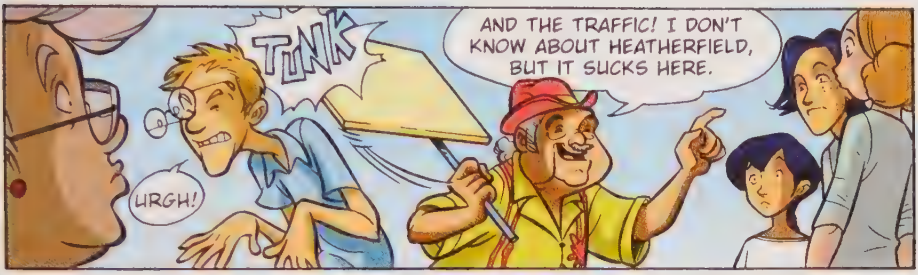

SO, CORNELIA?
NOTHING, MS. KNICKERBOCHER. NO SIGN OF MY LUGGAGE.

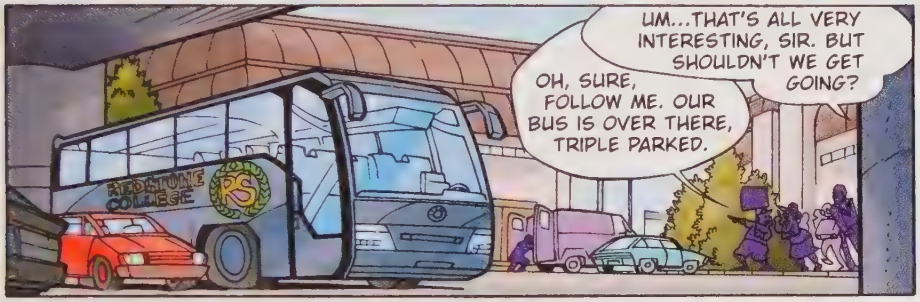

AND THERE'S NO SIGN OF OUR HOST EITHER.
IN MY EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOL TRIPS, THE ONES THAT START THE WORST END UP THE BEST.

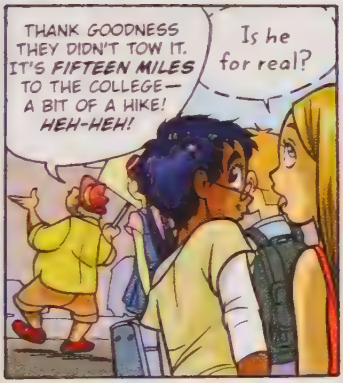

THEN THIS ONE'S GOING TO BE AWESOME.
LOOK OVER THERE. THAT MIGHT BE HIM!

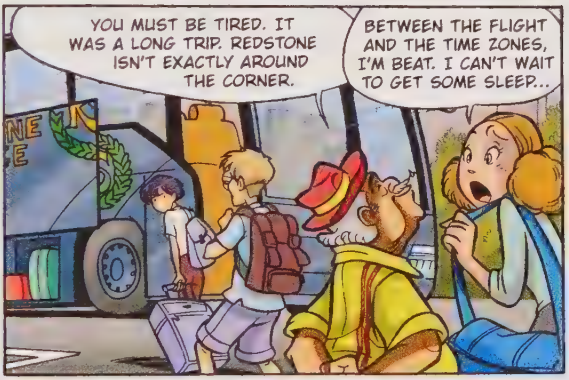
VERY OBSERVANT, MR. TUBBS.
-PANT-
HELLO, FOLKS. SORRY FOR THE DELAY.
SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE

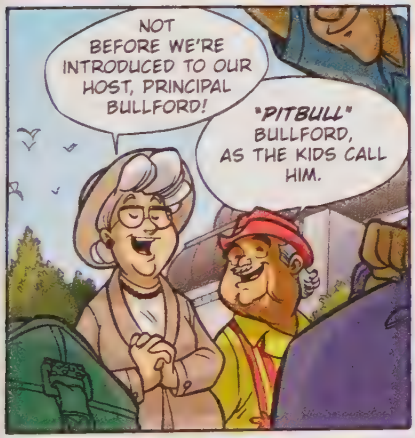
I TOOK TWO WRONG TURNS GETTING HERE. UNBELIEVABLE, HUH?
SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW BAD THE ROAD SIGNS ARE...

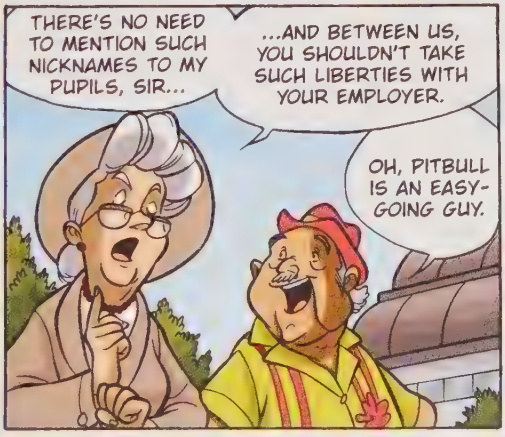

TINK
URGH!
AND THE TRAFFIC! I DON'T KNOW ABOUT HEATHERFIELD, BUT IT SUCKS HERE.

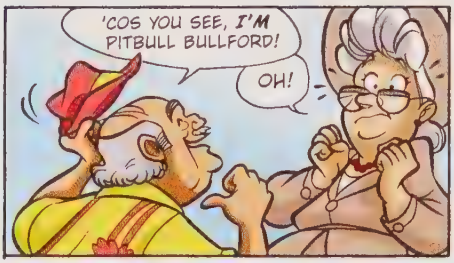

REDSTONE COLLEGE
RS
OH, SURE, FOLLOW ME. OUR BUS IS OVER THERE, TRIPLE PARKED.
UM...THAT'S ALL VERY INTERESTING, SIR. BUT SHOULDN'T WE GET GOING?


THANK GOODNESS THEY DIDN'T TOW IT. IT'S FIFTEEN MILES TO THE COLLEGE— A BIT OF A HIKE! HEH-HEH!
Is he for real?

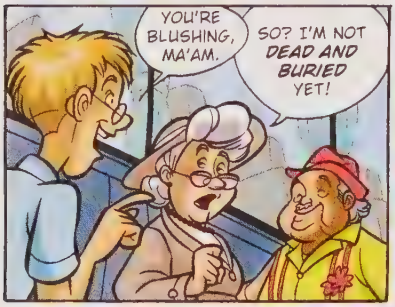

YOU MUST BE TIRED. IT WAS A LONG TRIP. REDSTONE ISN'T EXACTLY AROUND THE CORNER.
BETWEEN THE FLIGHT AND THE TIME ZONES, I'M BEAT. I CAN'T WAIT TO GET SOME SLEEP...

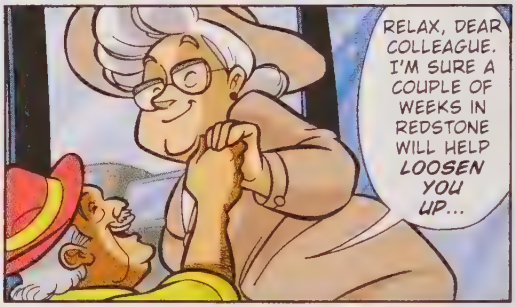

NOT BEFORE WE'RE INTRODUCED TO OUR HOST, PRINCIPAL BULLFORD!
"PITBULL" BULLFORD, AS THE KIDS CALL HIM.

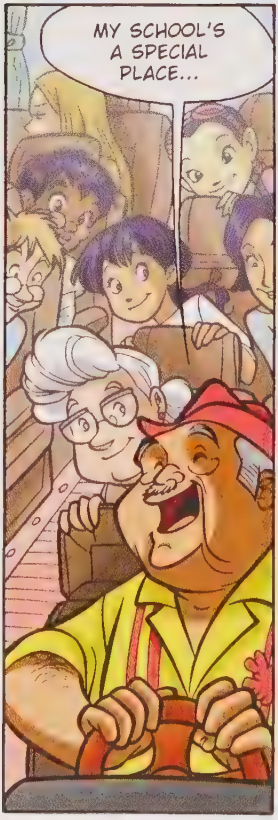

THERE'S NO NEED TO MENTION SUCH NICKNAMES TO MY PUPILS, SIR...
...AND BETWEEN US, YOU SHOULDN'T TAKE SUCH LIBERTIES WITH YOUR EMPLOYER.
OH, PITBULL IS AN EASY-GOING GUY.

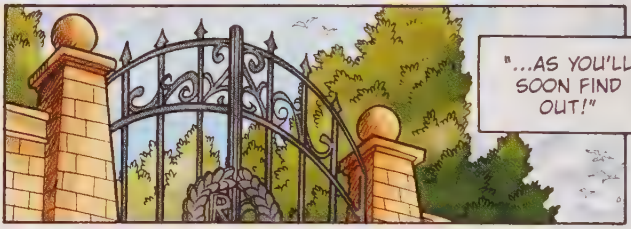

'COS YOU SEE, I'M PITBULL BULLFORD!
OH!

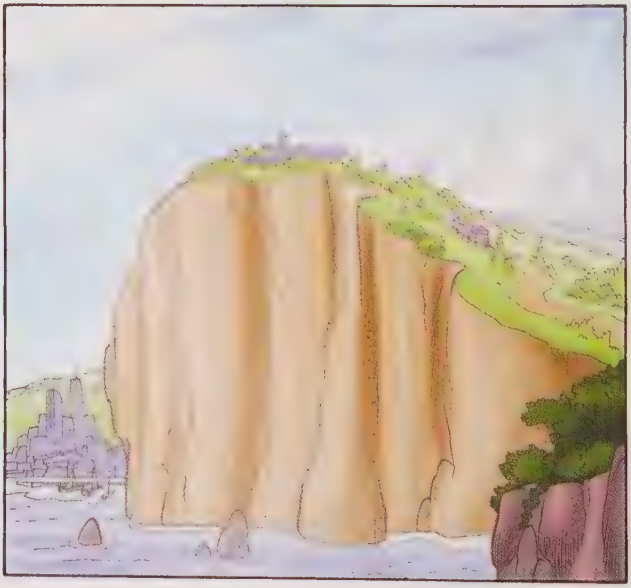
I ALWAYS FORGET TO INTRODUCE MYSELF. I GUESS YOU'RE MS. KNICKER-BOCHER ...
I... I DIDN'T KNOW... DIDN'T THINK...


YOU'RE BLUSHING, MA'AM.
SO? I'M NOT DEAD AND BURIED YET!


RELAX, DEAR COLLEAGUE. I'M SURE A COUPLE OF WEEKS IN REDSTONE WILL HELP LOOSEN YOU UP...

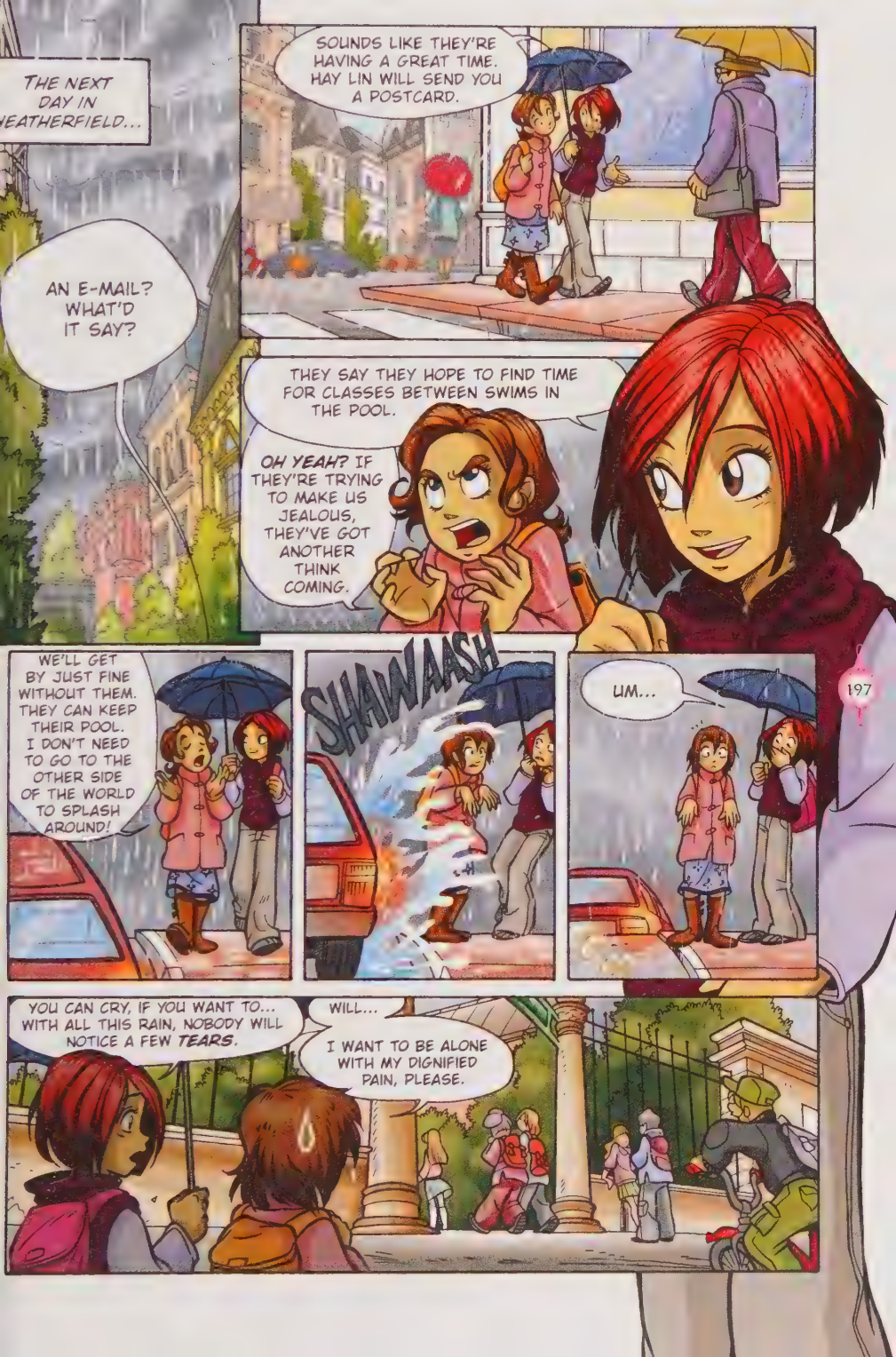

MY SCHOOL'S A SPECIAL PLACE...

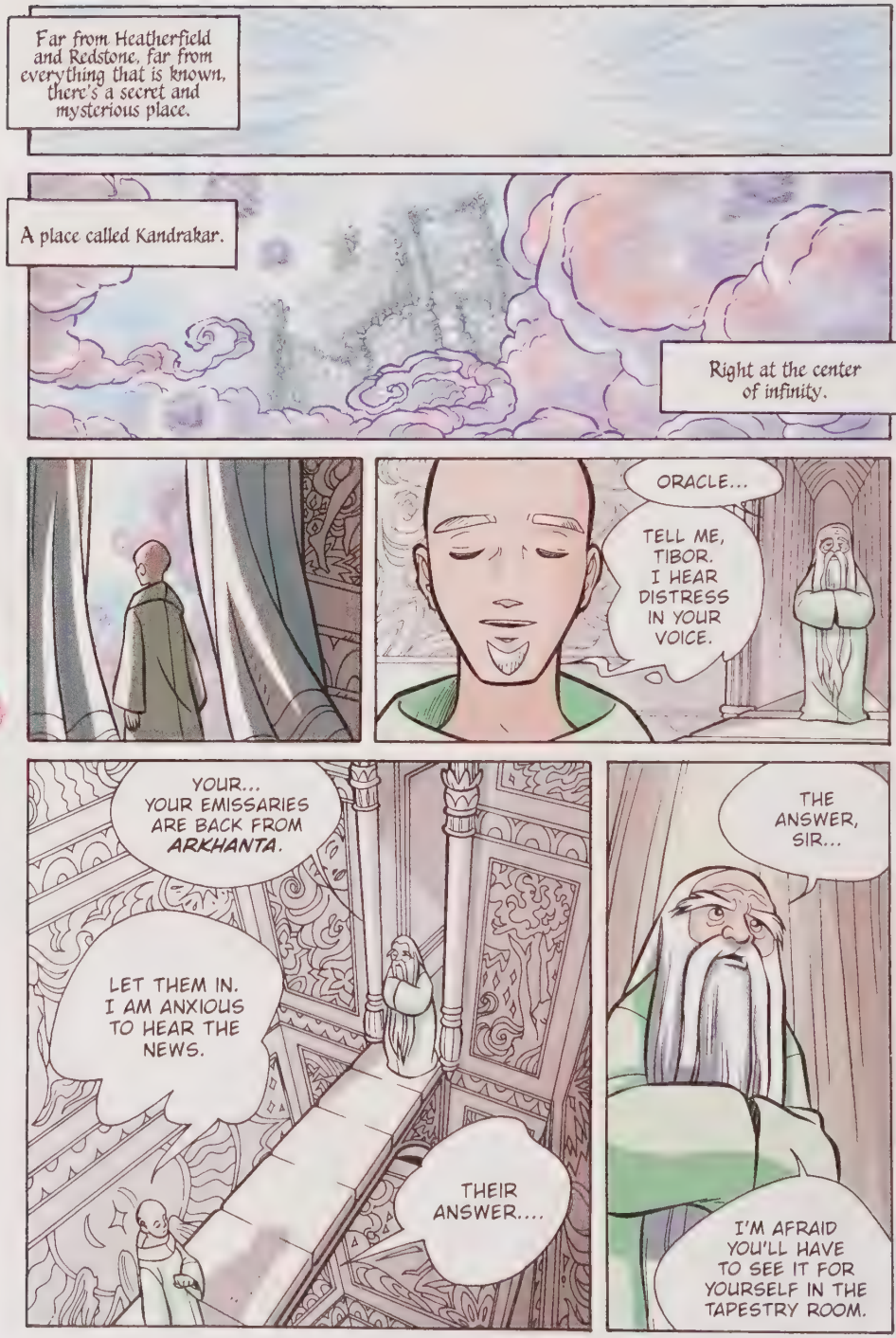

"...AS YOU'LL SOON FIND OUT!"



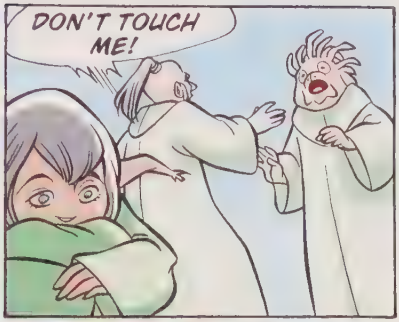
WOW! THIS PLACE IS INCREDIBLE. I ONLY JUST GOT HERE, AND I ALREADY LIKE IT.
BOY! COMPARED TO THIS, OUR SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE LOOKS LIKE A JANITOR'S CLOSET.
NOT BAD, HUH? WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF REDSTONE PARK...
...A NATURE RESERVE THAT'S HOUSED PORT NELSON'S MOST IMPORTANT SCHOOL FOR OVER 100 YEARS.
CAN I TAKE SOME PHOTOS FOR THE SCHOOL PAPER?
DO YOUR BEST, COURTNEY. AND YOU WRITE EVERYTHING DOWN, BESS.
TOMORROW YOU'LL GET TO KNOW MY STUDENTS AND TEACHERS. I HOPE YOU'LL LIKE IT HERE.
MY SCHOOL DOESN'T JUST HAVE CLASSROOMS, BUT MODERN LABORATORIES, LIBRARIES...

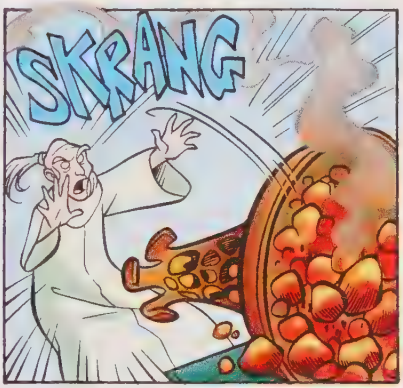
Well, maybe you don't need to write everything...
...GYMS, SWIMMING POOLS, SOCCER FIELDS, A THEATER, A CINEMA, AND COZY APARTMENTS FOR TEACHERS AND PUPILS.
I WANT TO TELL IRMA! WANNA CALL HER?
SHE'S PROBABLY ASLEEP. WHEN IT'S DAY HERE, IT'S NIGHT AT HOME.
YOU CAN ALWAYS SEND YOUR FRIEND AN E-MAIL.
"EACH OF YOUR ROOMS HAS A COMPUTER."
TELL ME I'M DREAMING...
I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK HOME. I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK HOME!
YOU'RE SMILING, CORNELIA. FEELING BRIGHTER?
MM... I THINK SO.


THE NEXT DAY IN HEATHERFIELD...
AN E-MAIL? WHAT'D IT SAY?
SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE HAVING A GREAT TIME. HAY LIN WILL SEND YOU A POSTCARD.
THEY SAY THEY HOPE TO FIND TIME FOR CLASSES BETWEEN SWIMS IN THE POOL.
OH YEAH? IF THEY'RE TRYING TO MAKE US JEALOUS, THEY'VE GOT ANOTHER THINK COMING.
WE'LL GET BY JUST FINE WITHOUT THEM. THEY CAN KEEP THEIR POOL. I DON'T NEED TO GO TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD TO SPLASH AROUND!
SHAWAASH
UM...
YOU CAN CRY, IF YOU WANT TO... WITH ALL THIS RAIN, NOBODY WILL NOTICE A FEW TEARS.
WILL...
I WANT TO BE ALONE WITH MY DIGNIFIED PAIN, PLEASE.

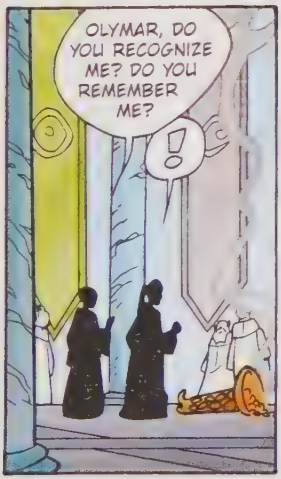

Far from Heatherfield and Redstone, far from everything that is known, there's a secret and mysterious place.
A place called Kandrakar.
Right at the center of infinity.
ORACLE...
TELL ME, TIBOR. I HEAR DISTRESS IN YOUR VOICE.
YOUR... YOUR EMISSARIES ARE BACK FROM ARKHANTA.
LET THEM IN. I AM ANXIOUS TO HEAR THE NEWS.
THEIR ANSWER....
THE ANSWER, SIR...
I'M AFRAID YOU'LL HAVE TO SEE IT FOR YOURSELF IN THE TAPESTRY ROOM.

STAND BACK!
S-STAND BACK!
DON'T BE SCARED. I'M NOT GOING TO HURT YOU.

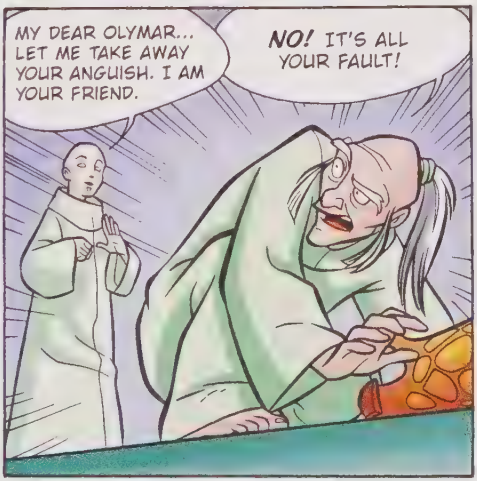

DON'T TOUCH ME!

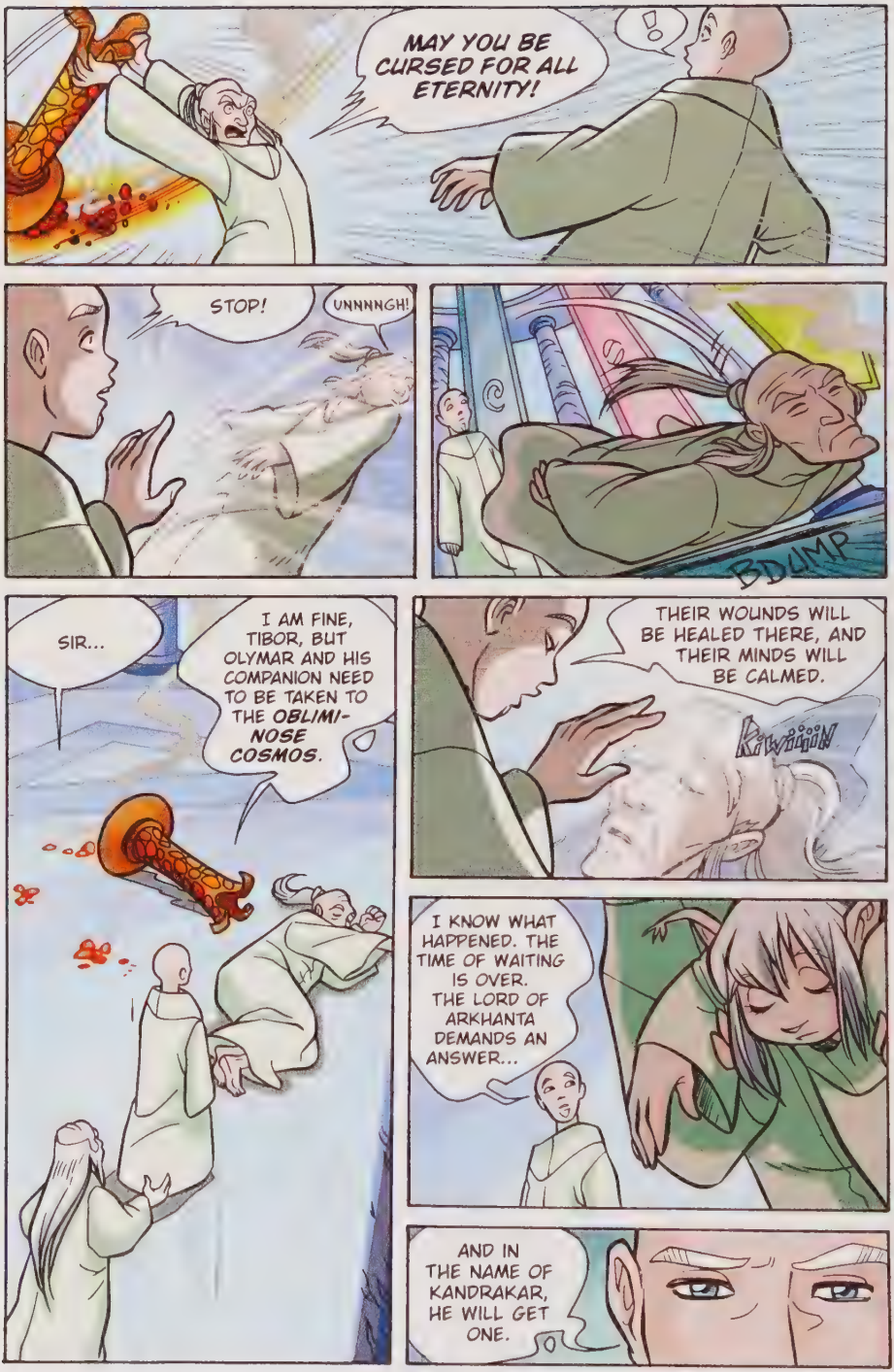

SKRANG

WHAT HAPPENED?
THEIR MINDS ARE IN SHOCK, SIR. THEY'RE TERRIFIED.
SOMEONE OR SOMETHING ON ARKHANTA REDUCED THEM TO THIS.


OLYMAR, DO YOU RECOGNIZE ME? DO YOU REMEMBER ME?
!

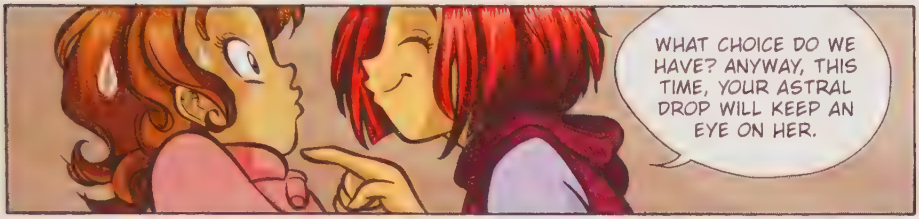
THIS VOICE... IT'S THE ORACLE!

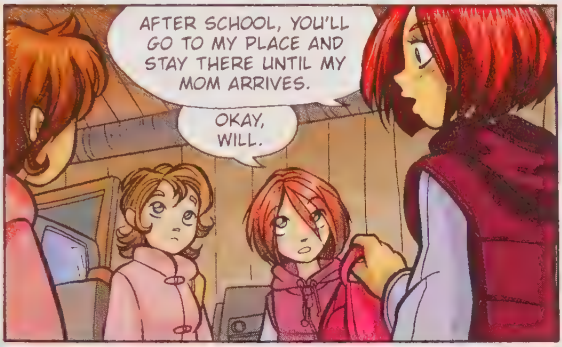

MY DEAR OLYMAR... LET ME TAKE AWAY YOUR ANGUISH. I AM YOUR FRIEND.
NO! IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT!

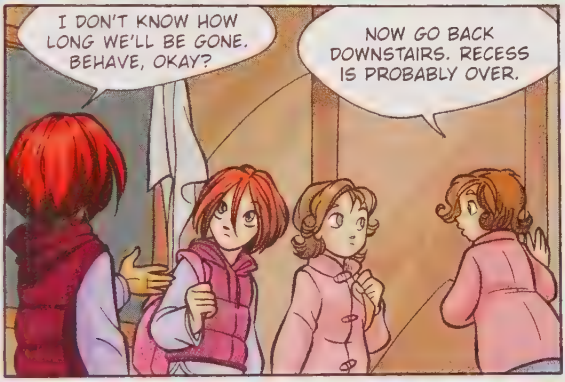

MAY YOU BE CURSED FOR ALL ETERNITY!
!
STOP!
UNNNNGH!
BDUMP
SIR...
I AM FINE, TIBOR, BUT OLYMAR AND HIS COMPANION NEED TO BE TAKEN TO THE OBLIMI-NOSE COSMOS.
THEIR WOUNDS WILL BE HEALED THERE, AND THEIR MINDS WILL BE CALMED.
KIVITIN
I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED. THE TIME OF WAITING IS OVER. THE LORD OF ARKHANTA DEMANDS AN ANSWER...
AND IN THE NAME OF KANDRAKAR, HE WILL GET ONE.

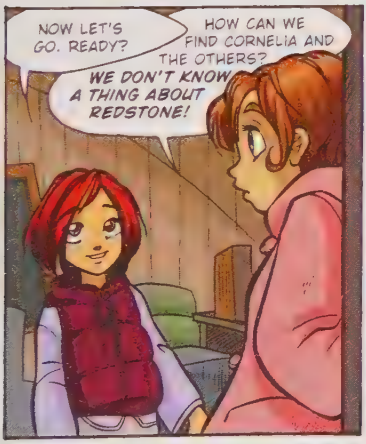
THE ORACLE...
CUSTODIANS OF THE FORTRESS, I SUMMON YOU.
OH NO...
AH!
!

*REMEMBER W.I.T.C.H. #23?

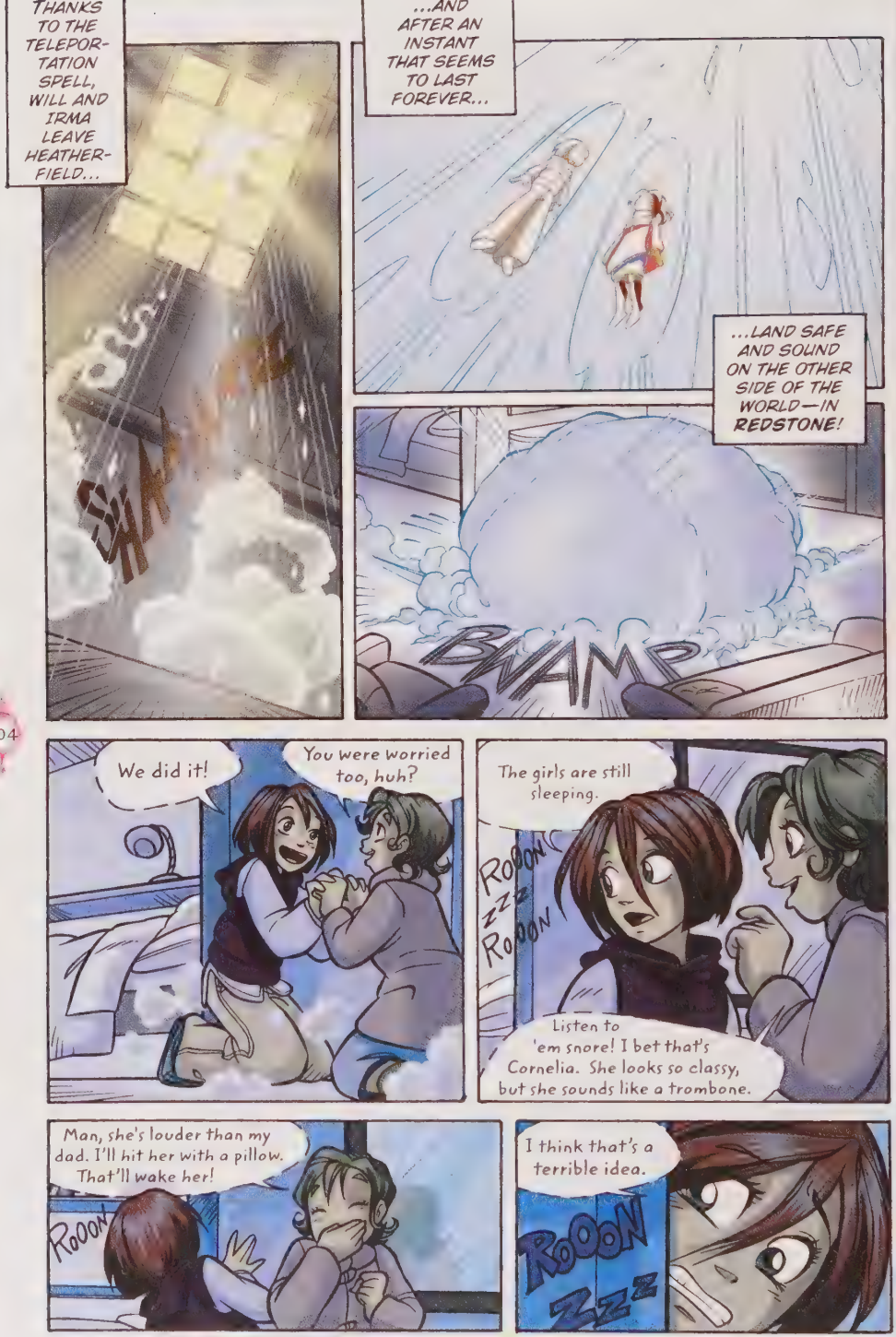

WHAT CHOICE DO WE HAVE? ANYWAY, THIS TIME, YOUR ASTRAL DROP WILL KEEP AN EYE ON HER.


AFTER SCHOOL, YOU'LL GO TO MY PLACE AND STAY THERE UNTIL MY MOM ARRIVES.
OKAY, WILL.

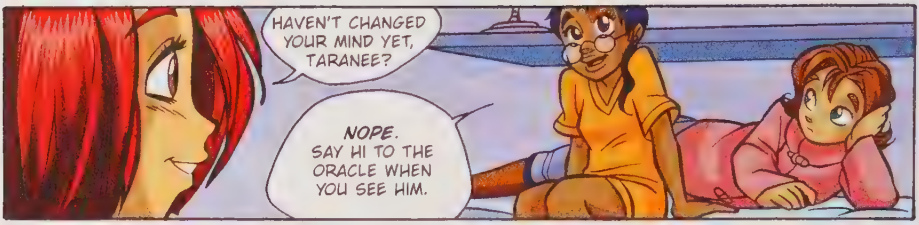

I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG WE'LL BE GONE. BEHAVE, OKAY?
NOW GO BACK DOWNSTAIRS. RECESS IS PROBABLY OVER.

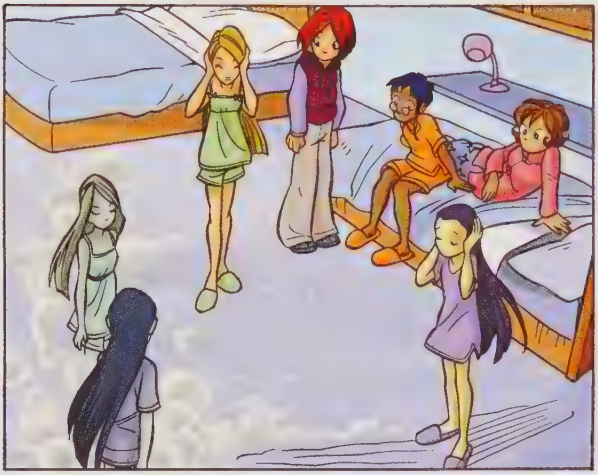

NOW LET'S GO. READY?
HOW CAN WE FIND CORNELIA AND THE OTHERS?
WE DON'T KNOW A THING ABOUT REDSTONE!

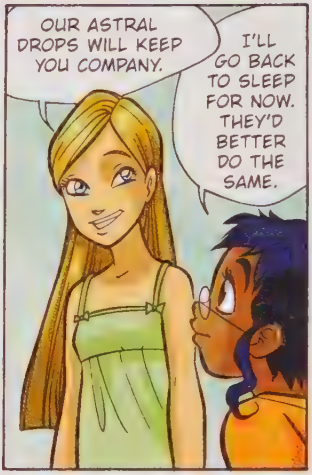
WE JUST HAVE TO FOCUS ON OUR FRIENDS, AND WITH LUCK, WE'LL MAKE IT. IT'S NIGHT THERE. NO ONE WILL SEE US.
YOU'RE THE BOSS, WILL...


THANKS TO THE TELEPORTATION SPELL, WILL AND IRMA LEAVE HEATHERFIELD...
SHAKE
...AND AFTER AN INSTANT THAT SEEMS TO LAST FOREVER...
...LAND SAFE AND SOUND ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD—IN REDSTONE!
BWAMP
We did it!
You were worried too, huh?
The girls are still sleeping.
ROOON ZZZ ROOON
Listen to 'em snore! I bet that's Cornelia. She looks so classy, but she sounds like a trombone.
Man, she's louder than my dad. I'll hit her with a pillow. That'll wake her!
ROOON
I think that's a terrible idea.
ROOON ZZZ

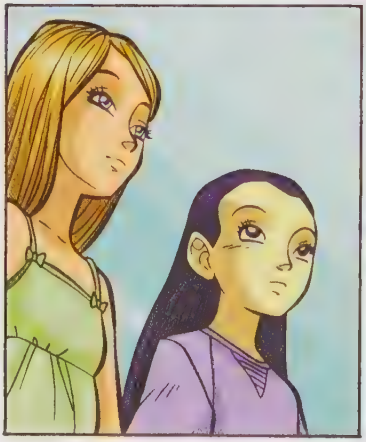
RRRROOOON RRRRR...
Because that's Ms. Knicker-bocher!
AHHHH!
Don't yell! If she wakes up, we're doomed.
WE GOT THE WRONG ROOM! HOW HORRIFYING... LEMME OUTTA HERE. LEMME OUT. LEMME OUT!
Which way do we go now?
You and your teleportation!
I knew it would go wrong.
!
IRMA! WILL! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
SEE?
IT'S GREAT SEEING YOU GUYS! IT WASN'T SO HARD GETTING HERE.
UNTRUE! IT WAS AWFUL! I GOTTA LIE DOWN...
CAN I HAVE A GLASS OF WATER? A PIECE OF CHOCOLATE? A SANDWICH?
YOU CAN REST IN KANDRA-KAR. THEY'RE WAITING FOR US.

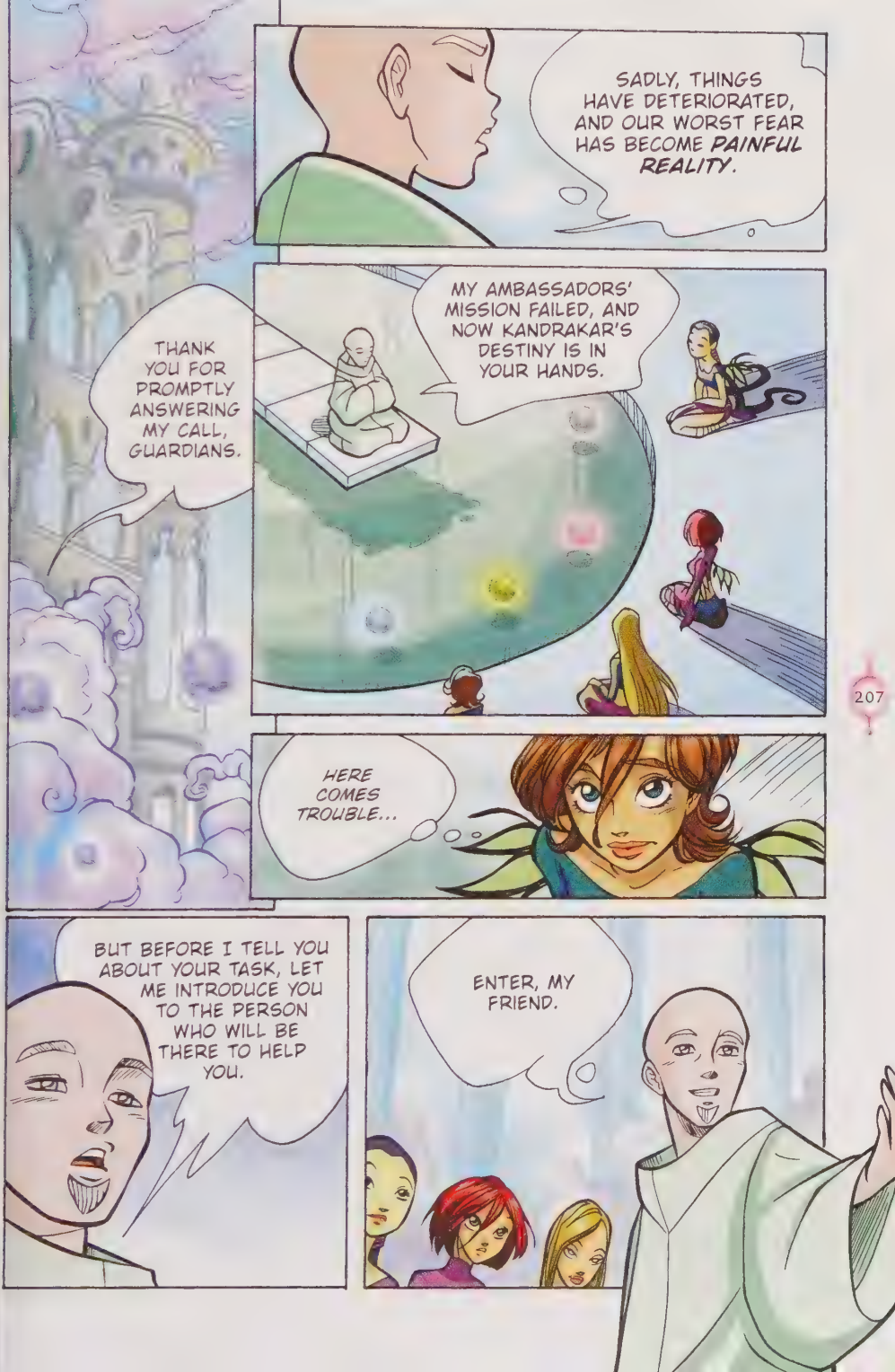

HAVEN'T CHANGED YOUR MIND YET, TARANEE?
NOPE. SAY HI TO THE ORACLE WHEN YOU SEE HIM.

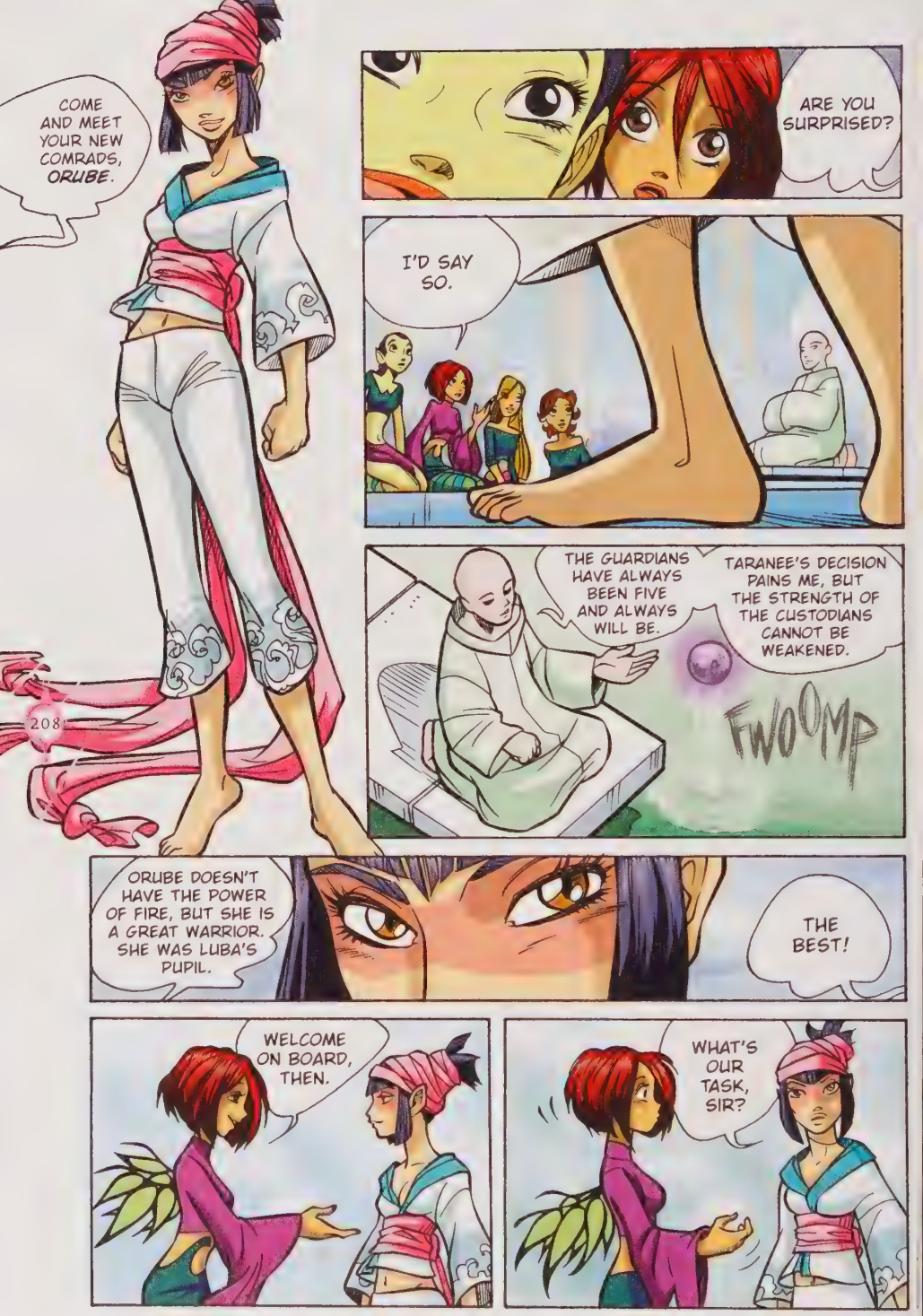



OUR ASTRAL DROPS WILL KEEP YOU COMPANY.
I'LL GO BACK TO SLEEP FOR NOW. THEY'D BETTER DO THE SAME.

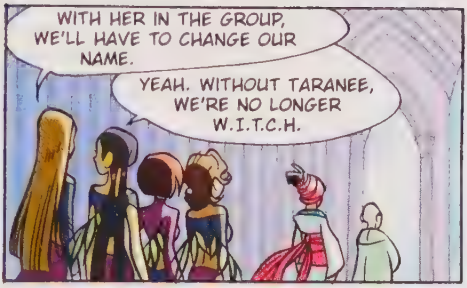
GOOD LUCK, YOU GUYS!
SEE YOU SOON, TARANEE.



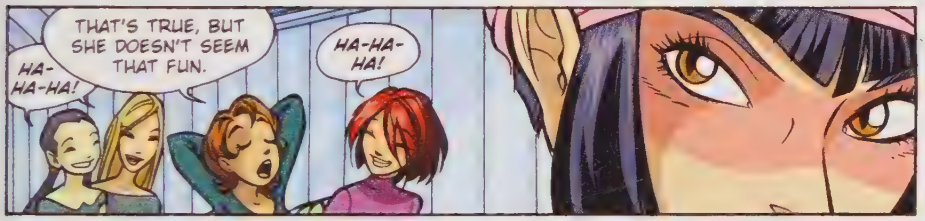

SADLY, THINGS HAVE DETERIORATED, AND OUR WORST FEAR HAS BECOME PAINFUL REALITY.
MY AMBASSADORS' MISSION FAILED, AND NOW KANDRAKAR'S DESTINY IS IN YOUR HANDS.
THANK YOU FOR PROMPTLY ANSWERING MY CALL, GUARDIANS.
HERE COMES TROUBLE...
BUT BEFORE I TELL YOU ABOUT YOUR TASK, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO THE PERSON WHO WILL BE THERE TO HELP YOU.
ENTER, MY FRIEND.

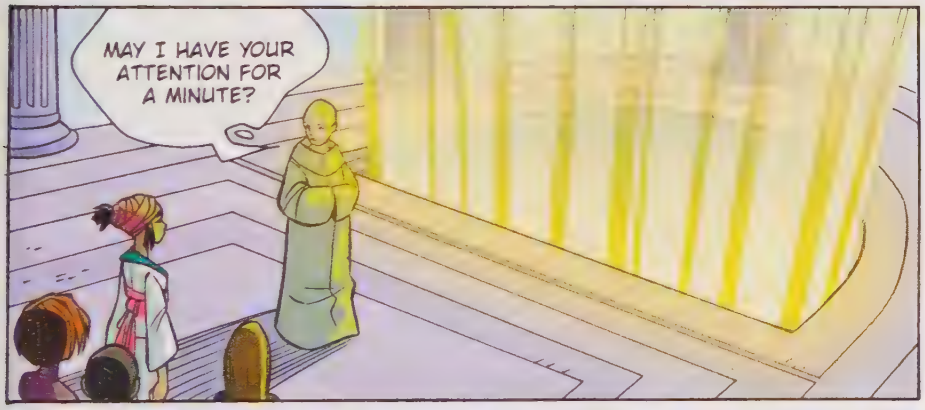

COME AND MEET YOUR NEW COMRADS, ORUBE.
ARE YOU SURPRISED?
I'D SAY SO.
THE GUARDIANS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FIVE AND ALWAYS WILL BE.
TARANEE'S DECISION PAINS ME, BUT THE STRENGTH OF THE CUSTODIANS CANNOT BE WEAKENED.
FWOOMP
ORUBE DOESN'T HAVE THE POWER OF FIRE, BUT SHE IS A GREAT WARRIOR. SHE WAS LUBA'S PUPIL.
THE BEST!
WELCOME ON BOARD, THEN.
WHAT'S OUR TASK, SIR?

FOLLOW ME, AND YOU WILL DISCOVER WHAT AWAITS YOU BEYOND KANDRAKAR'S GATES.

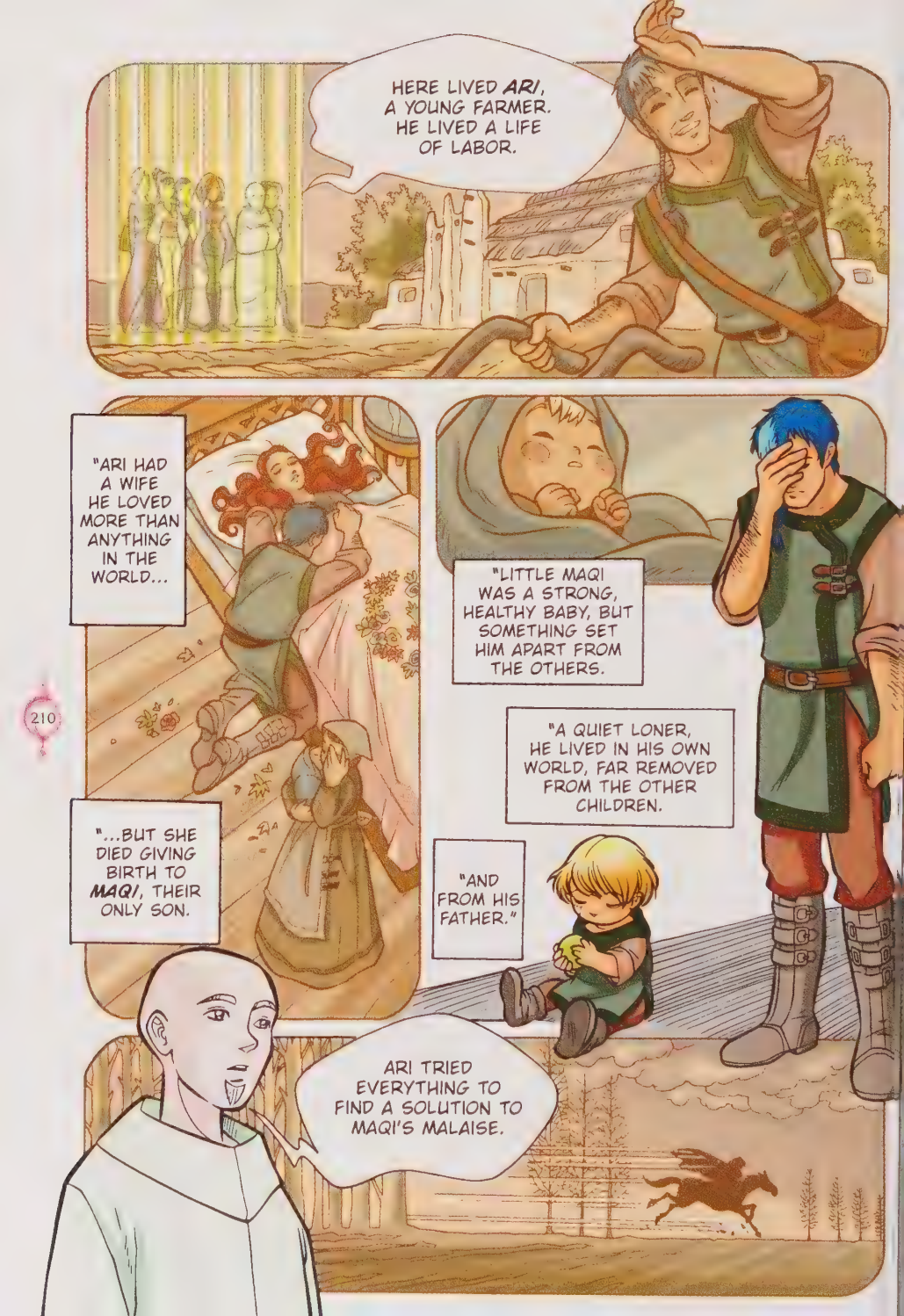

WITH HER IN THE GROUP, WE'LL HAVE TO CHANGE OUR NAME.
YEAH. WITHOUT TARANEE, WE'RE NO LONGER W.I.T.C.H.

WE COULD CALL OURSELVES "THE FUN FOUR." WHADDAYA THINK?
BUT WE'RE NOT FOUR.

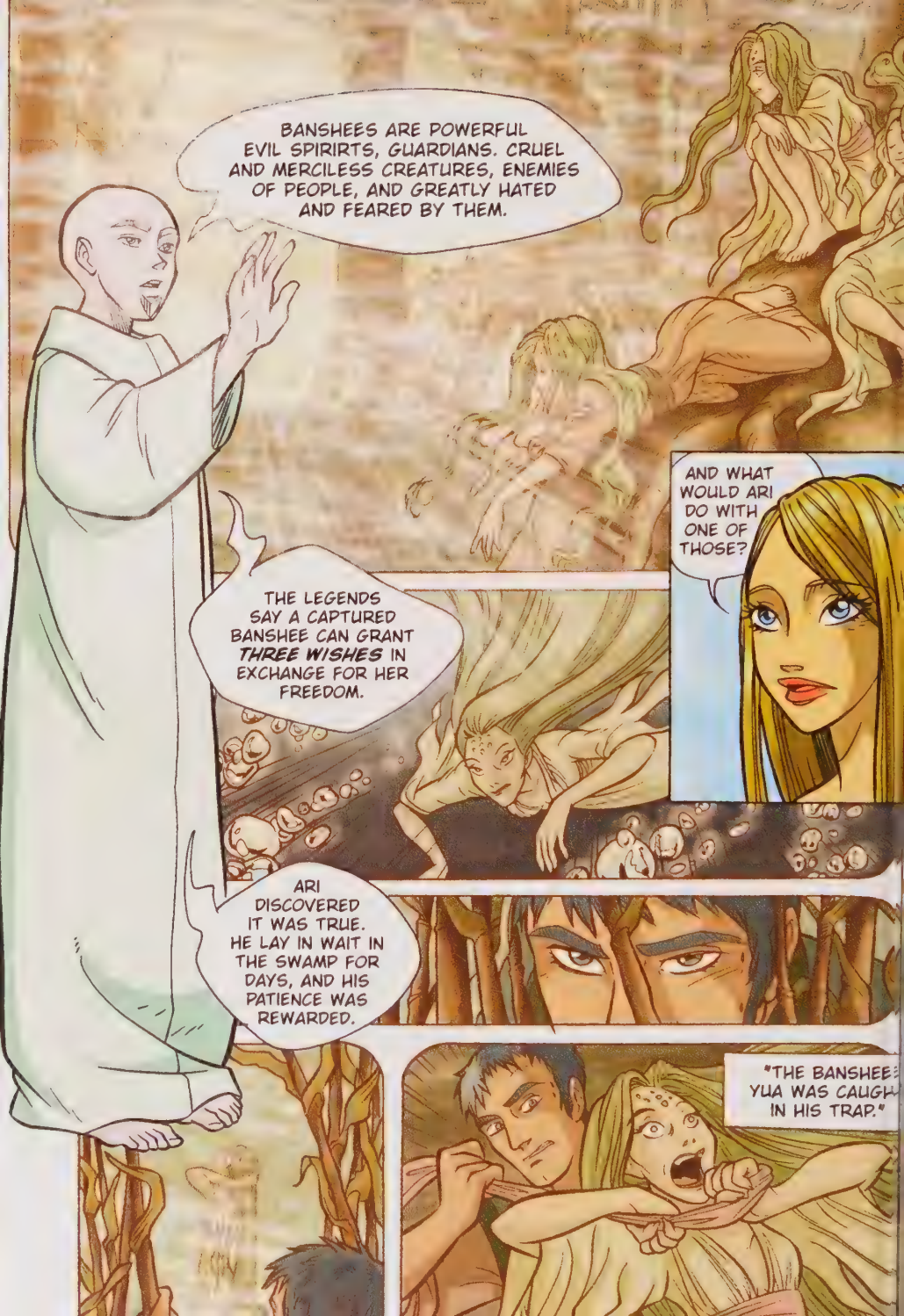

HA-HA-HA!
THAT'S TRUE, BUT SHE DOESN'T SEEM THAT FUN.
HA-HA-HA!

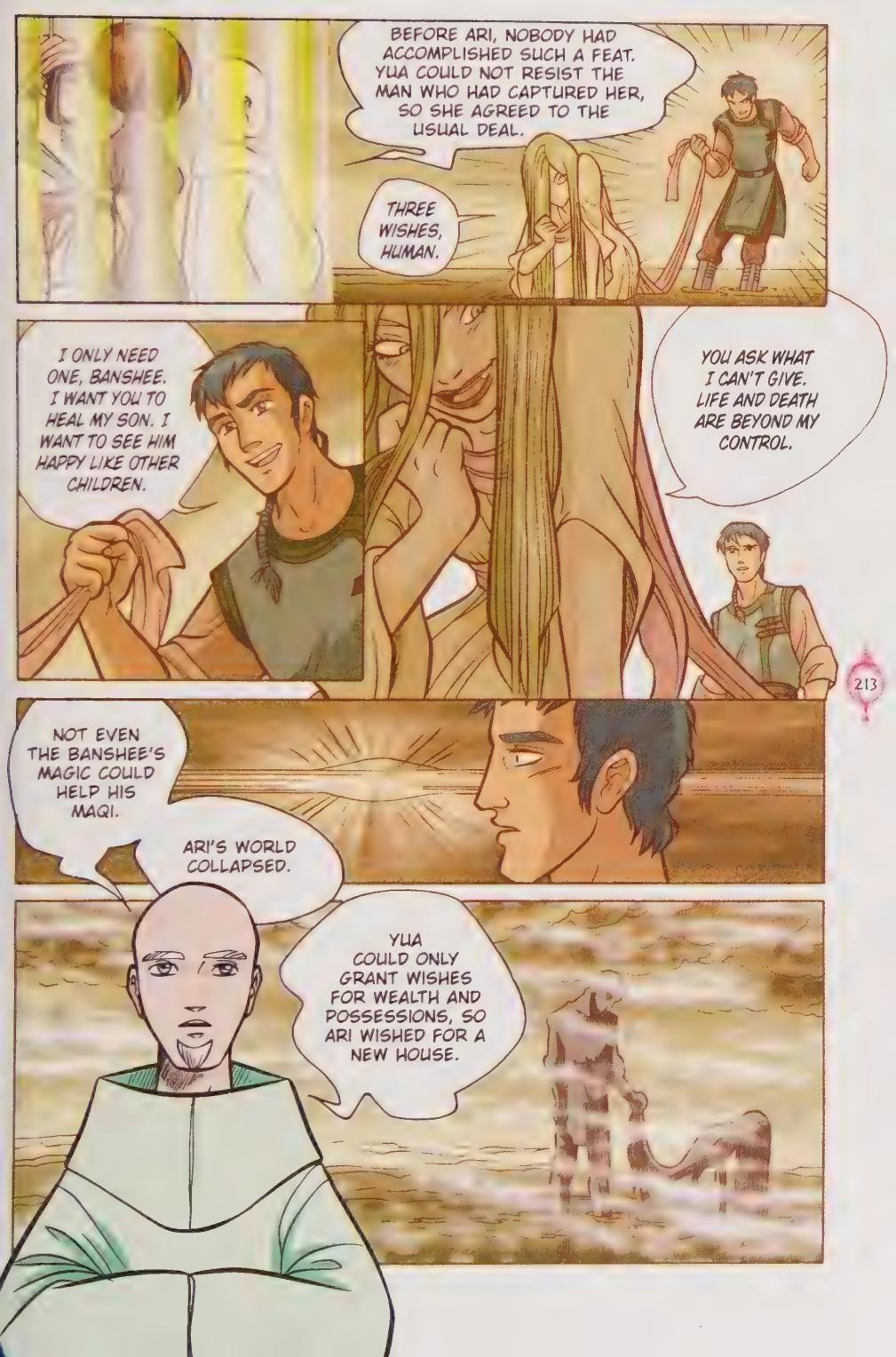

MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION FOR A MINUTE?

DURING YOUR LAST VISIT, I TOLD YOU ABOUT ARKHANTA.
A PEACEFUL AND HAPPY WORLD.

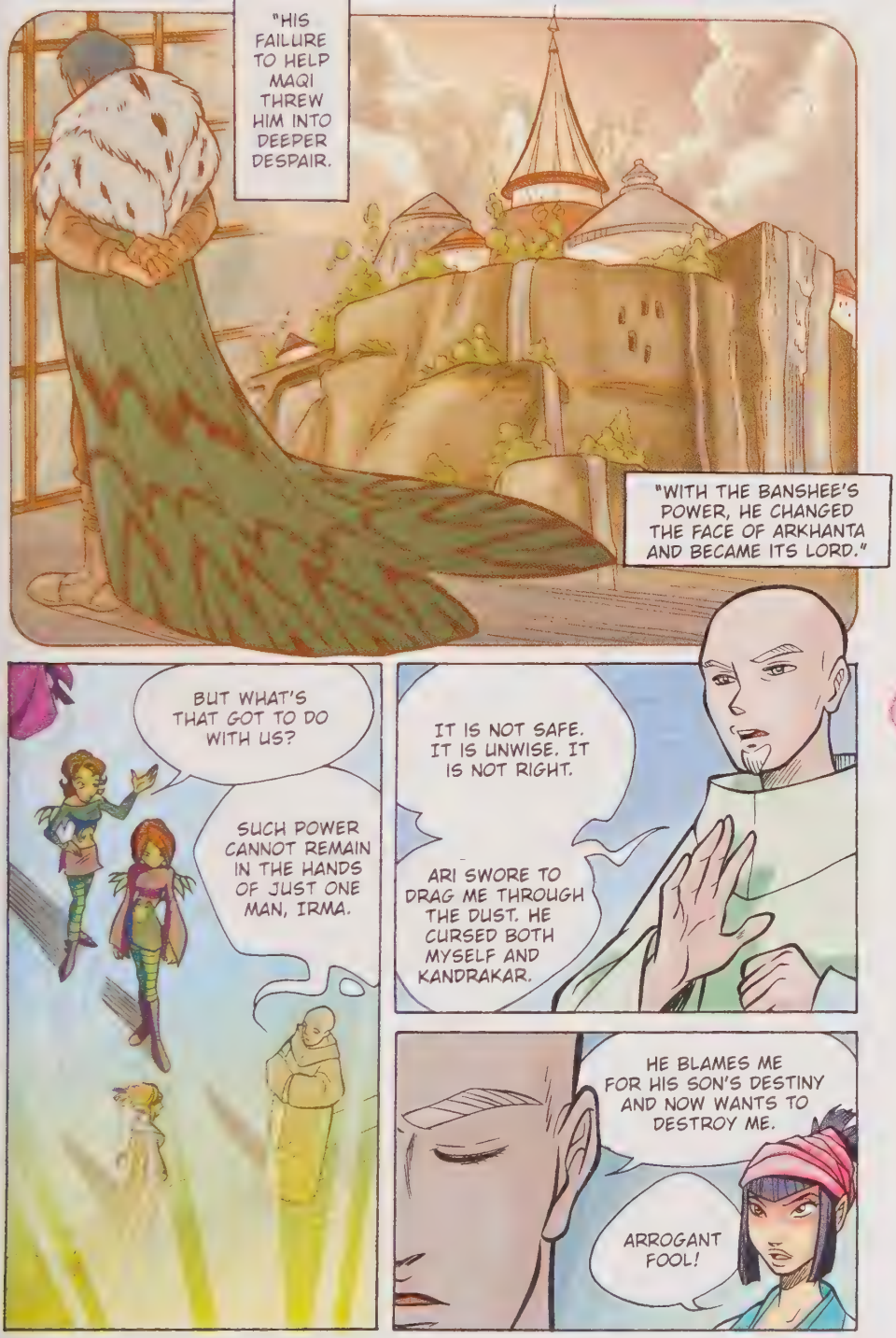

HERE LIVED ARI, A YOUNG FARMER. HE LIVED A LIFE OF LABOR.
"ARI HAD A WIFE HE LOVED MORE THAN ANYTHING IN THE WORLD...
"...BUT SHE DIED GIVING BIRTH TO MAQI, THEIR ONLY SON.
"LITTLE MAQI WAS A STRONG, HEALTHY BABY, BUT SOMETHING SET HIM APART FROM THE OTHERS.
"A QUIET LONER, HE LIVED IN HIS OWN WORLD, FAR REMOVED FROM THE OTHER CHILDREN.
"AND FROM HIS FATHER."
ARI TRIED EVERYTHING TO FIND A SOLUTION TO MAQI'S MALAISE.

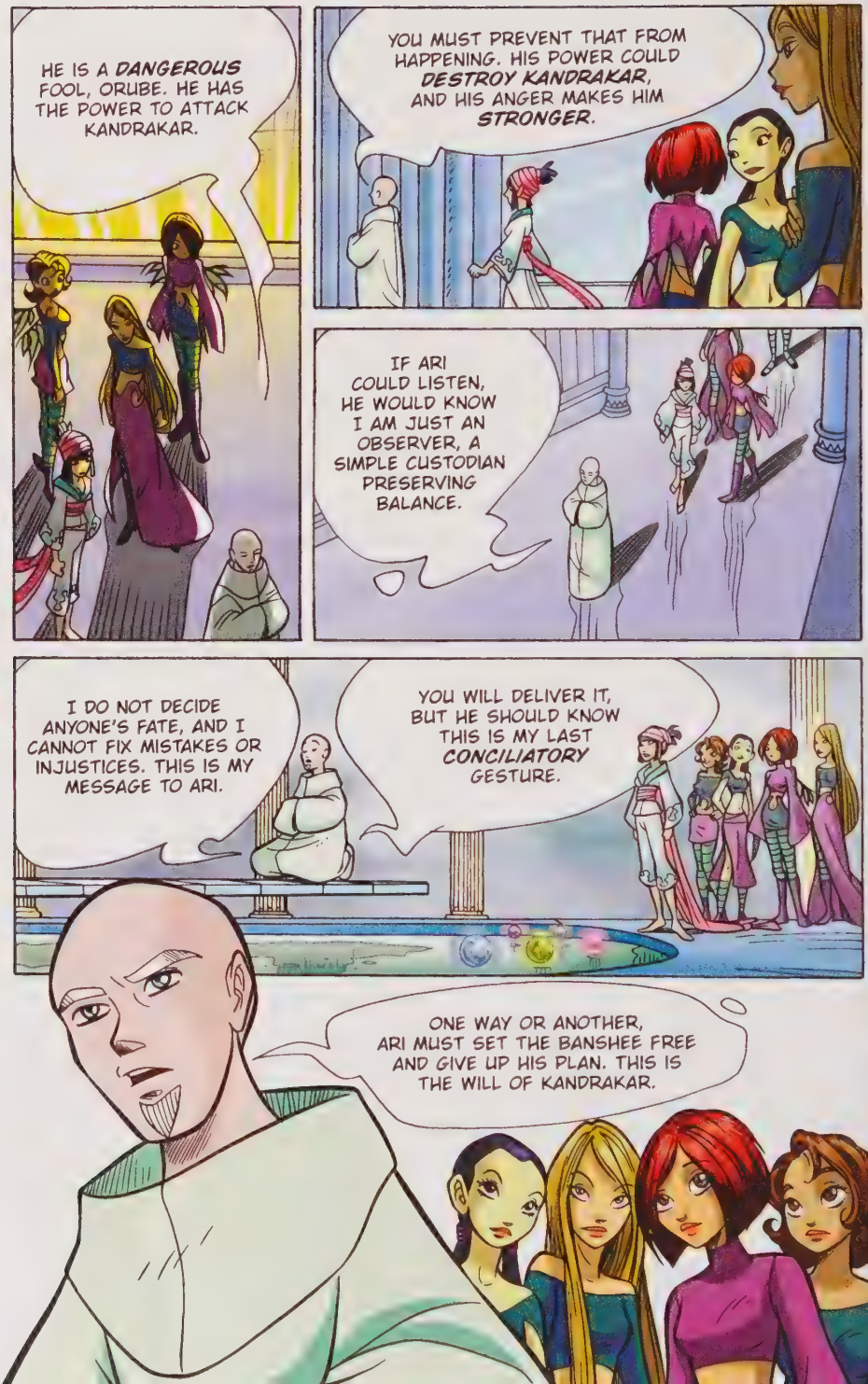
"HE ASKED FOR THE HELP OF EVERY WISE MAN IN ARKHANTA, VISITING SCHOLARS, AND DOCTORS..."
...BUT NONE COULD HEAL MAQI. SCIENCE COULD NOT HELP ARI'S SON, SO HE HAD AN INCREDIBLE IDEA...
HE WOULD CAPTURE A BANSHEE.
OH!
YOU KNOW WHAT A BANSHEE IS?
NO!
THEN WHY DID YOU SAY "OH"?
SEEMED LIKE THE RIGHT THING TO DO.
I LIKE HER LESS AND LESS.
DON'T GO LOOKING FOR TROUBLE, IRMA.

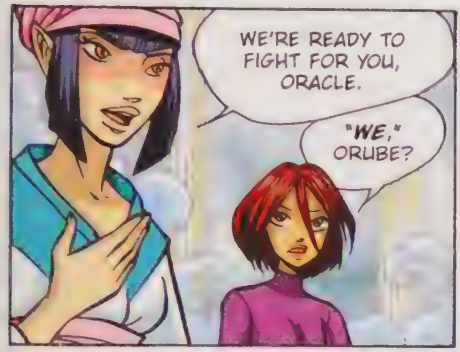

BANSHEES ARE POWERFUL EVIL SPIRIRTS, GUARDIANS. CRUEL AND MERCILESS CREATURES, ENEMIES OF PEOPLE, AND GREATLY HATED AND FEARED BY THEM.
AND WHAT WOULD ARI DO WITH ONE OF THOSE?
THE LEGENDS SAY A CAPTURED BANSHEE CAN GRANT THREE WISHES IN EXCHANGE FOR HER FREEDOM.
ARI DISCOVERED IT WAS TRUE. HE LAY IN WAIT IN THE SWAMP FOR DAYS, AND HIS PATIENCE WAS REWARDED.
"THE BANSHEE YUA WAS CAUGH IN HIS TRAP."

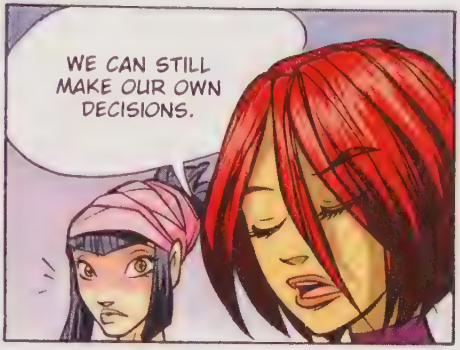

BEFORE ARI, NOBODY HAD ACCOMPLISHED SUCH A FEAT. YUA COULD NOT RESIST THE MAN WHO HAD CAPTURED HER, SO SHE AGREED TO THE USUAL DEAL.
THREE WISHES, HUMAN.
I ONLY NEED ONE, BANSHEE. I WANT YOU TO HEAL MY SON. I WANT TO SEE HIM HAPPY LIKE OTHER CHILDREN.
YOU ASK WHAT I CAN'T GIVE. LIFE AND DEATH ARE BEYOND MY CONTROL.
213
NOT EVEN THE BANSHEE'S MAGIC COULD HELP HIS MAQI.
ARI'S WORLD COLLAPSED.
YUA COULD ONLY GRANT WISHES FOR WEALTH AND POSSESSIONS, SO ARI WISHED FOR A NEW HOUSE.

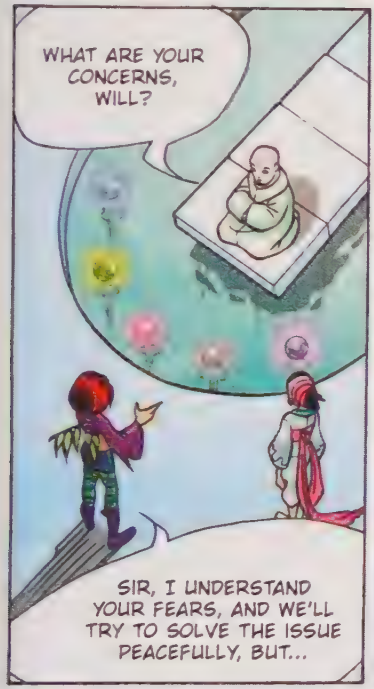
"THE SCARLET STRONGHOLD, A HUGE, WONDERFUL PALACE WHERE MAQI COULD LIVE IN PEACE.
HIS SECOND WISH WAS FOR MONEY TO BUY MAQI ANYTHING HE WANTED.
214
AND HIS LAST WISH?
IT WAS THE BIGGEST.
YOU'LL BE FOREVER AT MY SERVICE, TO GRANT EVERY WISH I HAVE.
YOU... YOU TRICKED ME!
WRETCHED HUMAN, YOU TRICKED ME!
QUIET, YUA. THAT'S NOT HOW A SERVANT ADDRESSES HER MASTER.
"THAT WAS WHEN ARI L ALL HOPE AND BECAM DIFFERENT PERSON.

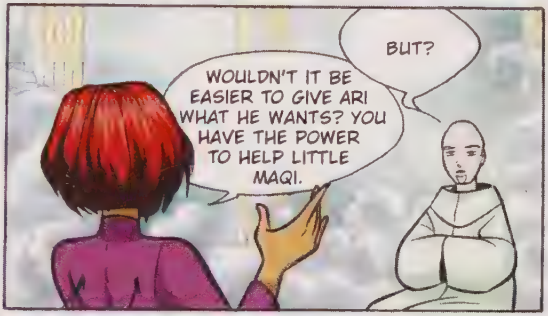

"HIS FAILURE TO HELP MAQI THREW HIM INTO DEEPER DESPAIR.
"WITH THE BANSHEE'S POWER, HE CHANGED THE FACE OF ARKHANTA AND BECAME ITS LORD."
BUT WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH US?
SUCH POWER CANNOT REMAIN IN THE HANDS OF JUST ONE MAN, IRMA.
IT IS NOT SAFE. IT IS UNWISE. IT IS NOT RIGHT.
ARI SWORE TO DRAG ME THROUGH THE DUST. HE CURSED BOTH MYSELF AND KANDRAKAR.
HE BLAMES ME FOR HIS SON'S DESTINY AND NOW WANTS TO DESTROY ME.
ARROGANT FOOL!

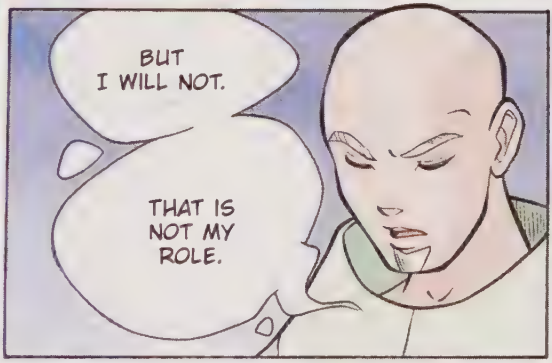

HE IS A DANGEROUS FOOL, ORUBE. HE HAS THE POWER TO ATTACK KANDRAKAR.
YOU MUST PREVENT THAT FROM HAPPENING. HIS POWER COULD DESTROY KANDRAKAR, AND HIS ANGER MAKES HIM STRONGER.
IF ARI COULD LISTEN, HE WOULD KNOW I AM JUST AN OBSERVER, A SIMPLE CUSTODIAN PRESERVING BALANCE.
I DO NOT DECIDE ANYONE'S FATE, AND I CANNOT FIX MISTAKES OR INJUSTICES. THIS IS MY MESSAGE TO ARI.
YOU WILL DELIVER IT, BUT HE SHOULD KNOW THIS IS MY LAST CONCILIATORY GESTURE.
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, ARI MUST SET THE BANSHEE FREE AND GIVE UP HIS PLAN. THIS IS THE WILL OF KANDRAKAR.

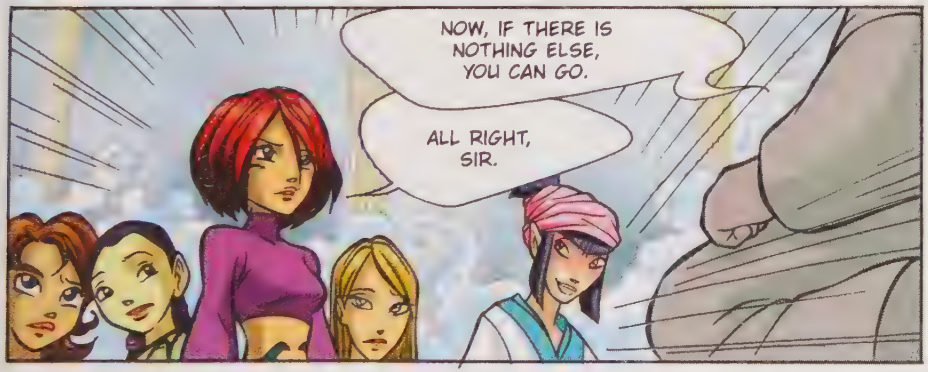

WE'RE READY TO FIGHT FOR YOU, ORACLE.
"WE," ORUBE?

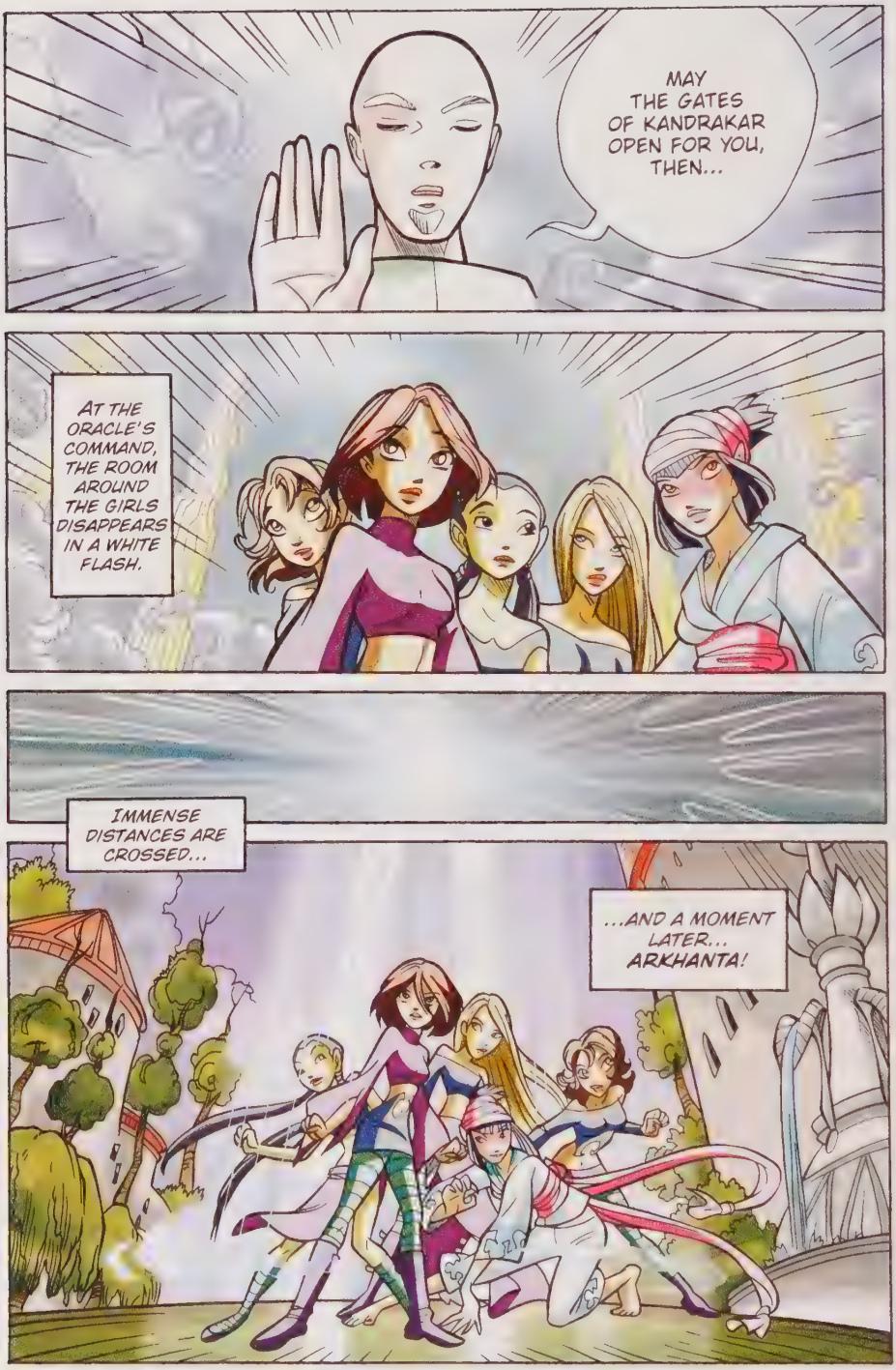

WE CAN STILL MAKE OUR OWN DECISIONS.


WHAT ARE YOUR CONCERNS, WILL?
SIR, I UNDERSTAND YOUR FEARS, AND WE'LL TRY TO SOLVE THE ISSUE PEACEFULLY, BUT...

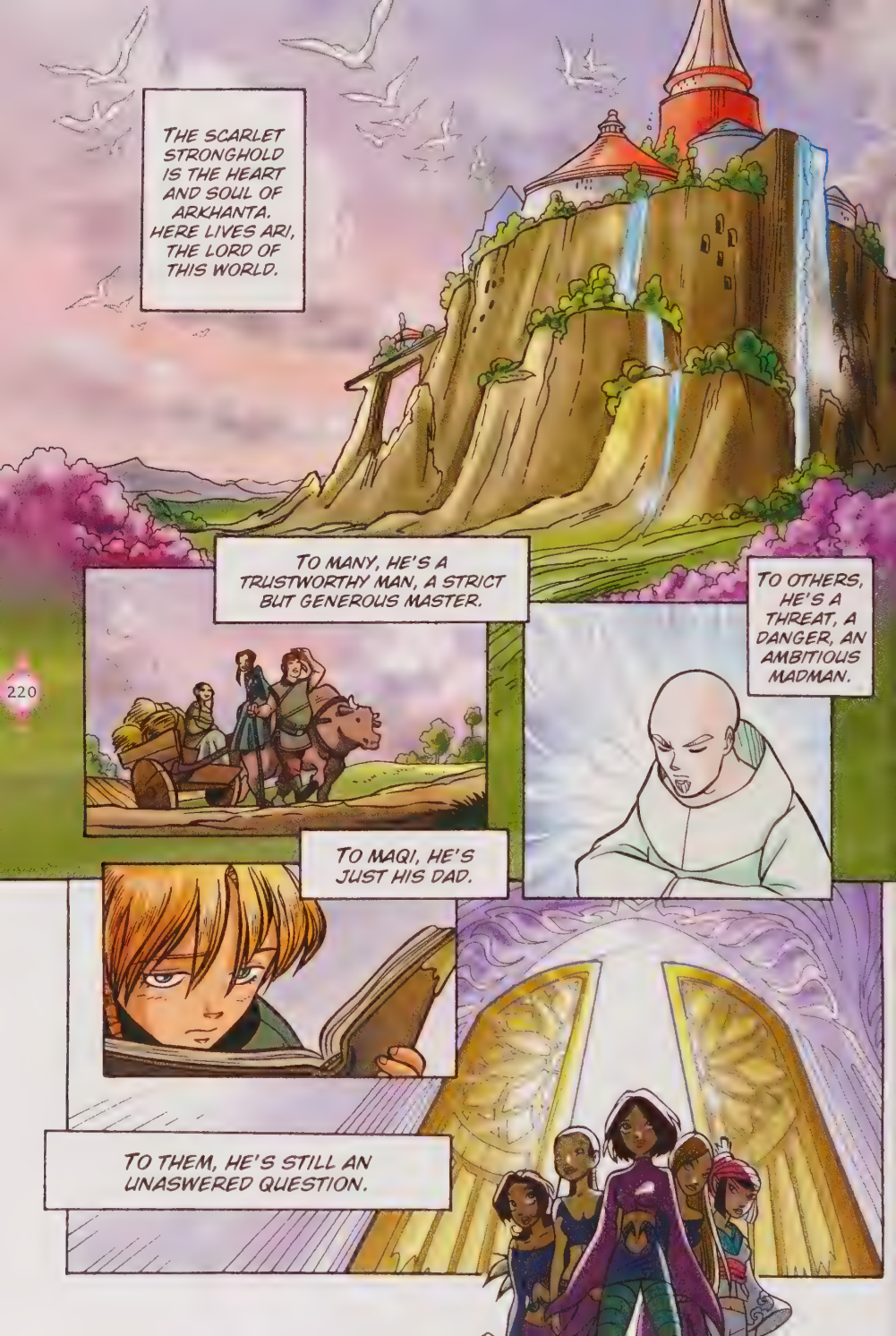

BUT?
WOULDN'T IT BE EASIER TO GIVE ARI WHAT HE WANTS? YOU HAVE THE POWER TO HELP LITTLE MAQI.


BUT I WILL NOT.
THAT IS NOT MY ROLE.

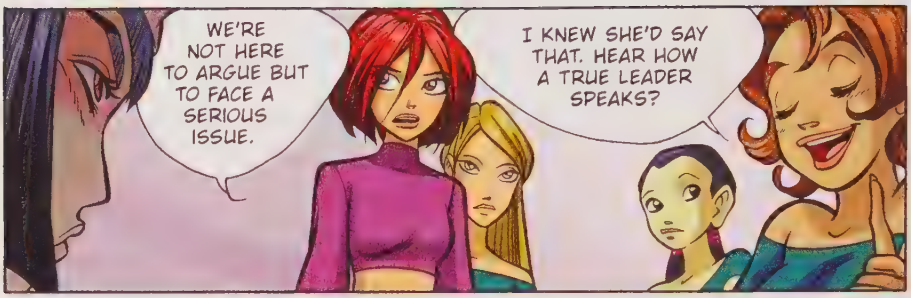

NOW, IF THERE IS NOTHING ELSE, YOU CAN GO.
ALL RIGHT, SIR.


MAY THE GATES OF KANDRAKAR OPEN FOR YOU, THEN...
AT THE ORACLE'S COMMAND, THE ROOM AROUND THE GIRLS DISAPPEARS IN A WHITE FLASH.
IMMENSE DISTANCES ARE CROSSED...
...AND A MOMENT LATER... ARKHANTA!

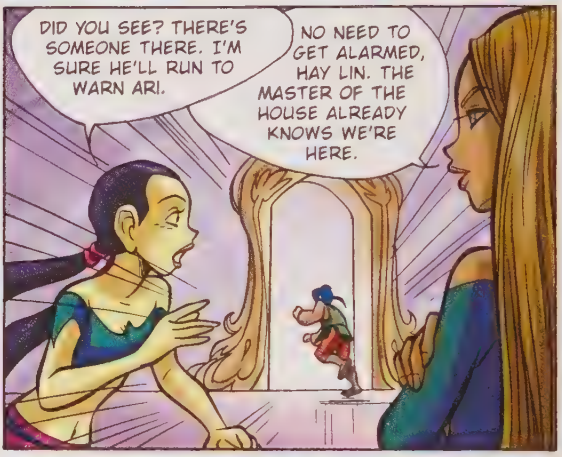
TLOC
THEY'RE VERY PRETTY, MAQI.
SIR, YOU HAVE VISITORS.
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.


THE SCARLET STRONGHOLD IS THE HEART AND SOUL OF ARKHANTA. HERE LIVES ARI, THE LORD OF THIS WORLD.
TO MANY, HE'S A TRUSTWORTHY MAN, A STRICT BUT GENEROUS MASTER.
TO OTHERS, HE'S A THREAT, A DANGER, AN AMBITIOUS MADMAN.
TO MAQI, HE'S JUST HIS DAD.
TO THEM, HE'S STILL AN UNANSWERED QUESTION.

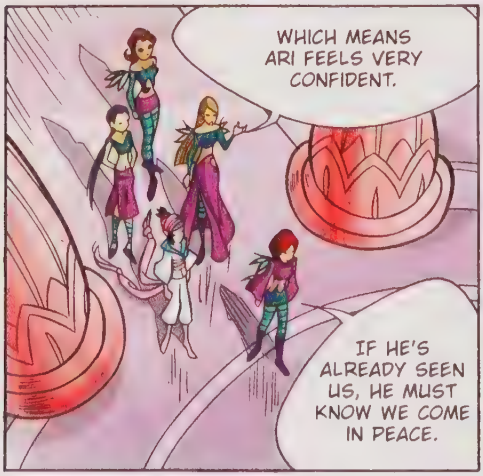
SO THAT'S OUR PLAN TO TAKE ON ARI?
NOT CONVINCED? IT'S PRETTY STRAIGHT-FORWARD.
WE GO IN AND ASK HIM TO SURRENDER.
AND IF WE DON'T LIKE HIS ANSWER, WE KNOCK HIM AROUND A BIT.
THAT'S RIDICULOUS. WHAT MAKES YOU THINK HE'LL LISTEN TO YOU AFTER REJECTING THE ORACLE'S AMBASSADORS?
BECAUSE WE'RE PRETTIER!
YOU SHOULD TAKE THINGS MORE SERIOUSLY, GIRL!
MY NAME IS IRMA!
AND MINE IS ORUBE!
NICE NAME, FOR A CAT!
!


WE'RE NOT HERE TO ARGUE BUT TO FACE A SERIOUS ISSUE.
I KNEW SHE'D SAY THAT. HEAR HOW A TRUE LEADER SPEAKS?

ANYWAY, ORUBE'S RIGHT, IRMA.
ALL RIGHT, NEVER MIND.


DID YOU SEE? THERE'S SOMEONE THERE. I'M SURE HE'LL RUN TO WARN ARI.
NO NEED TO GET ALARMED, HAY LIN. THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE ALREADY KNOWS WE'RE HERE.

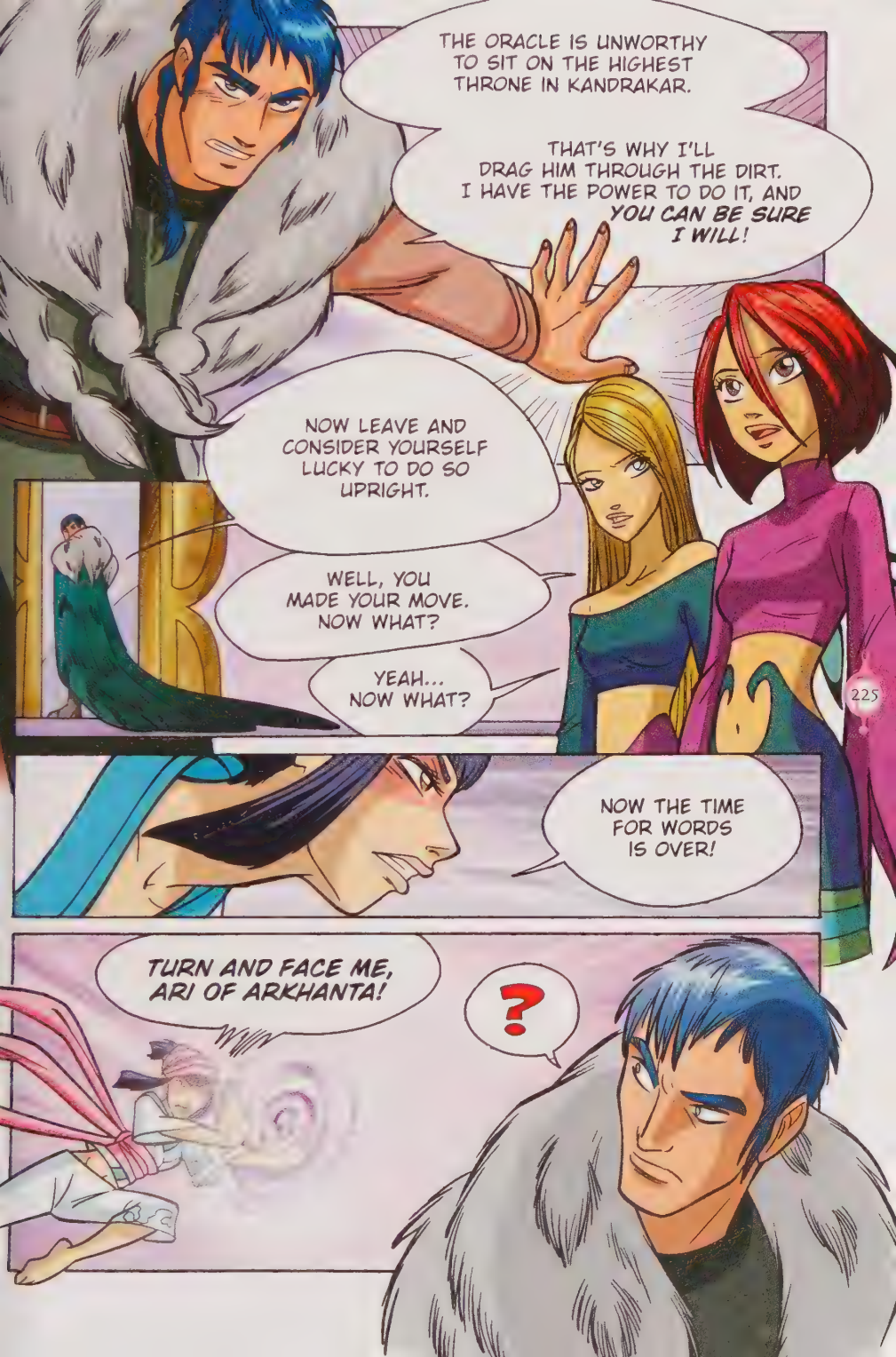
HOW CAN YOU TELL?
LOOK AROUND. THERE ARE NO GUARDS. THIS PALACE IS OPEN TO EVERYONE.


WHICH MEANS ARI FEELS VERY CONFIDENT.
IF HE'S ALREADY SEEN US, HE MUST KNOW WE COME IN PEACE.

BUT WE'RE NOT COMING IN PEACE.
YES WE ARE, ORUBE. LET'S KEEP A LEVEL HEAD AND THINK BEFORE WE ACT.

!
?
GOOD IDEA, STRANGERS.
IT'S ARI!
I SEE YOU KNOW MY NAME, BUT I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT YOU. THAT PUTS ME AT A DISADVANTAGE. I'LL HAVE TO DEFEND MYSELF.
WE'RE KANDRAKAR'S GUARDIANS, SIR.
WE'RE HERE TO TALK TO YOU.
KANDRA-KAR!
YOU'RE VERY YOUNG. THE ORACLE'S HIDING BEHIND LITTLE GIRLS NOW?
APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEIVING.
YOU WERE BRAVE TO COME ALL THE WAY HERE, BUT YOUR JOURNEY WAS FOR NOTHING.
I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOUR MASTER WHAT I NEEDED TO.
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR SON...

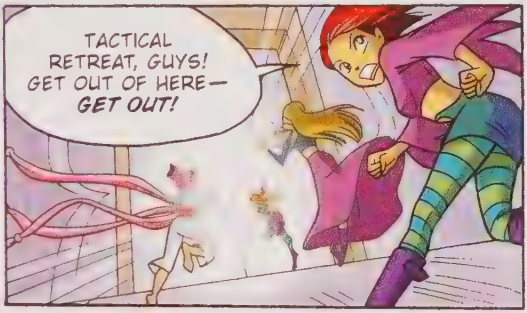
DON'T TALK ABOUT MY SON! YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT HIM. NOTHING!
YOUR ORACLE COULDN'T DO ANYTHING TO HELP MY CHILD!
HE WAS DEAF TO MY PRAYERS!
HE NEVER ANSWERED WHEN I ASKED FOR HELP.
SO HOW CAN HE CLAIM TO BE THE WISEST OF THE WISE? THE BEST OF THE BEST?
HOW CAN HE DEMAND RESPECT?

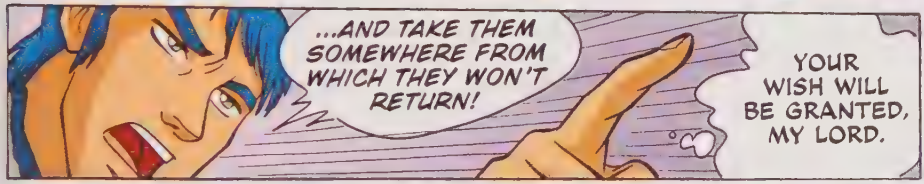

THE ORACLE IS UNWORTHY TO SIT ON THE HIGHEST THRONE IN KANDRAKAR.
THAT'S WHY I'LL DRAG HIM THROUGH THE DIRT. I HAVE THE POWER TO DO IT, AND YOU CAN BE SURE I WILL!
NOW LEAVE AND CONSIDER YOURSELF LUCKY TO DO SO UPRIGHT.
WELL, YOU MADE YOUR MOVE. NOW WHAT?
YEAH... NOW WHAT?
NOW THE TIME FOR WORDS IS OVER!
TURN AND FACE ME, ARI OF ARKHANTA!
?

NO!
SHRAAAAAK
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU JUST DID!
ARE YOU CRAZY? ARE YOU CRAZY?!
CHALLENGING ME IS MADNESS, BUT YOU MADE YOUR CHOICE...
...AND NOW YOU'LL SUFFER THE CONSE-QUENCES!
YUA!

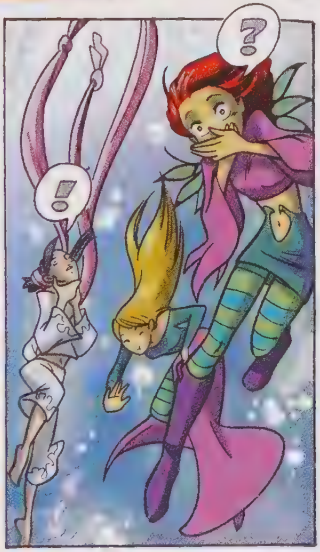
I'M LISTENING, MASTER.
GET RID OF THESE INTRUDERS, SPIRIT. GET THEM AWAY FROM ME...

IT'S THE BANSHEE!
WE'RE SUNK. LET'S *RUN*!


TACTICAL RETREAT, GUYS! GET OUT OF HERE— *GET OUT!*

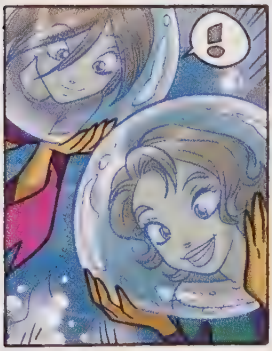

...AND TAKE THEM SOMEWHERE FROM WHICH THEY WON'T RETURN!
YOUR WISH WILL BE GRANTED, MY LORD.

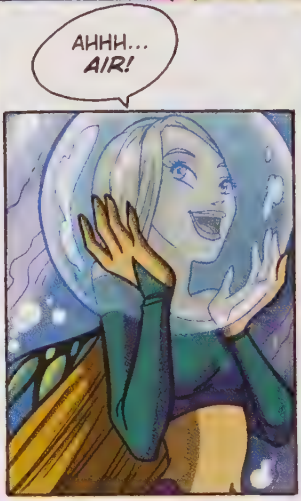
RIGHT NOW!

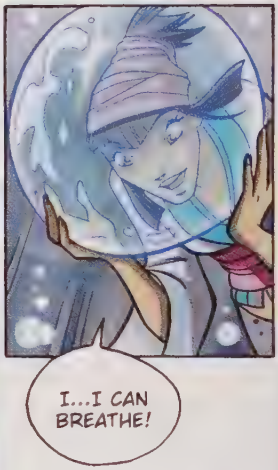

?
!

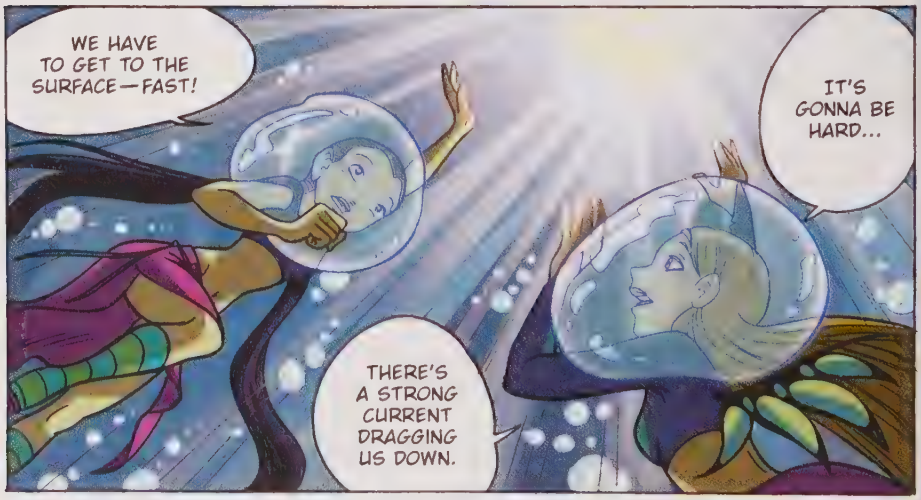
NGHHHH!
!

I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
KZZZZZZLLM

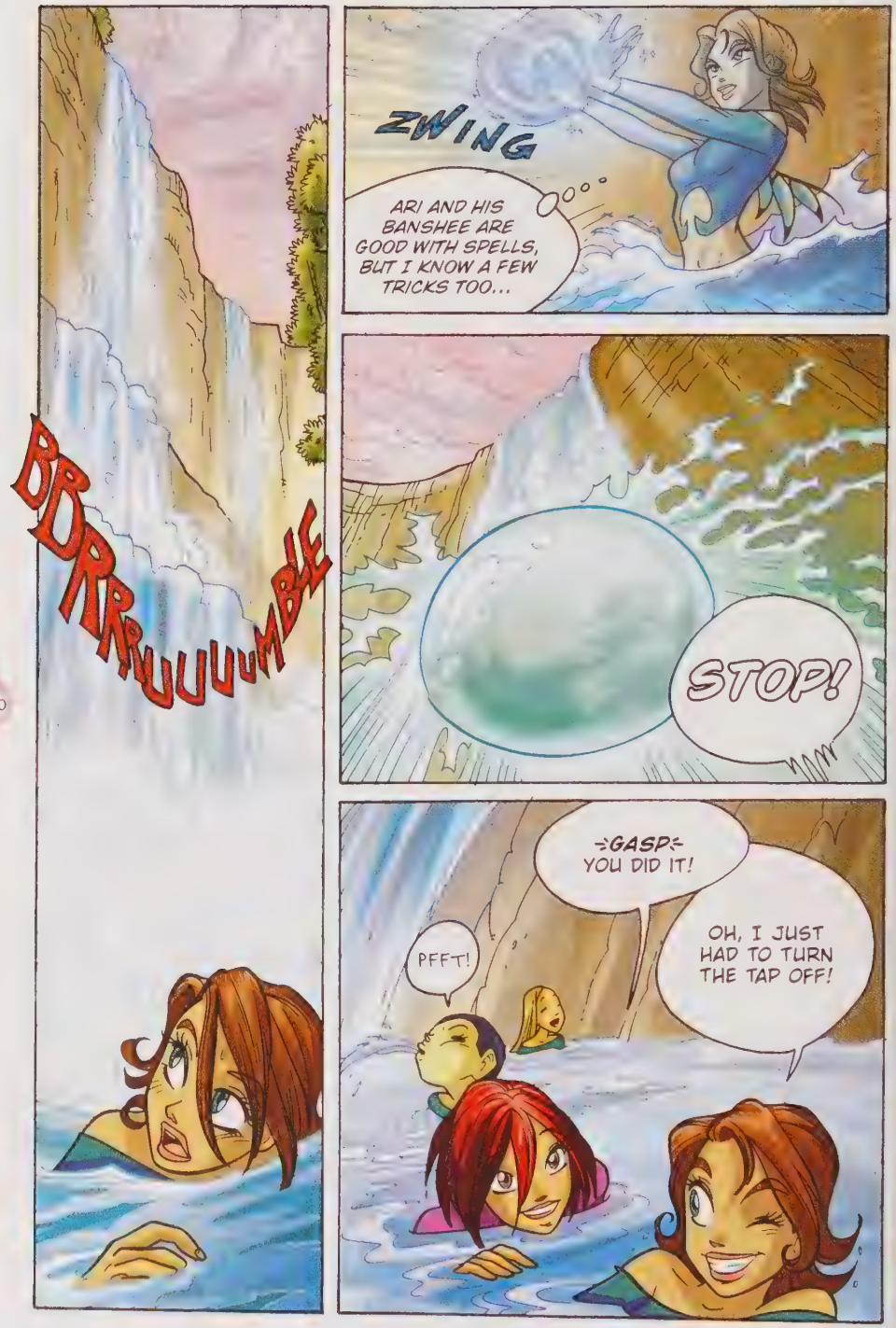

!
-GASP-
-HFF-

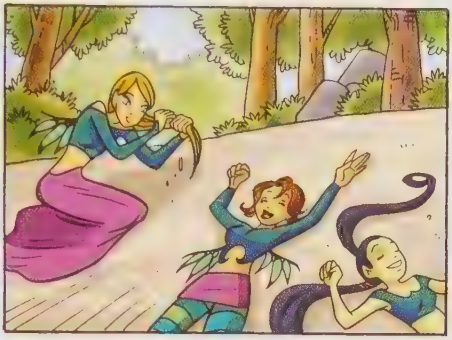

AHHH... AIR!

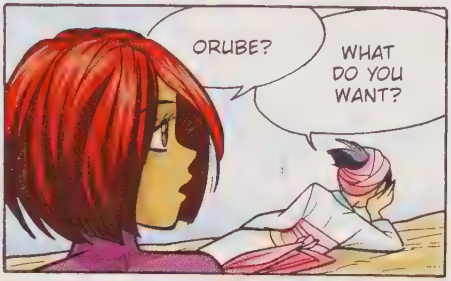

I...I CAN BREATHE!


WE HAVE TO GET TO THE SURFACE—FAST!
IT'S GONNA BE HARD...
THERE'S A STRONG CURRENT DRAGGING US DOWN.

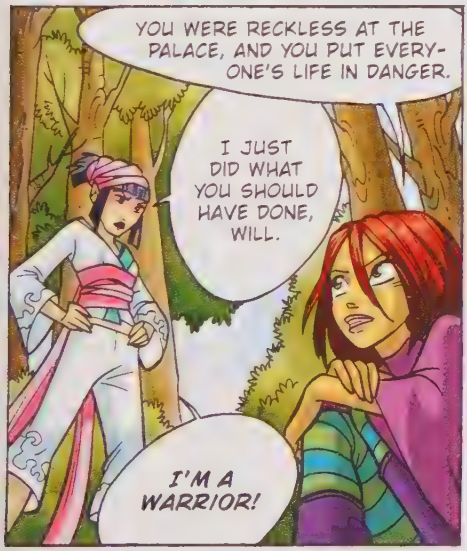
I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT. WE'RE IN MY ELEMENT! HOLD HANDS...
I HOPE I HAVEN'T SPOKEN TOO SOON. THE CURRENT'S REALLY STRONG, BUT I KNOW I CAN DO IT...
IRMA!
FASTER, IRMA. FASTER...
WE MADE IT...
AAAH!


ZWING
ARI AND HIS BANSHEE ARE GOOD WITH SPELLS, BUT I KNOW A FEW TRICKS TOO...
BURRRUUUUMBLE
STOP!
=GASP=
YOU DID IT!
PFFT!
OH, I JUST HAD TO TURN THE TAP OFF!

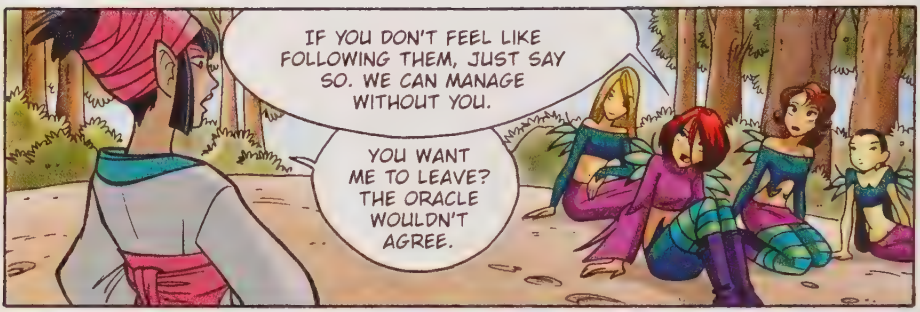


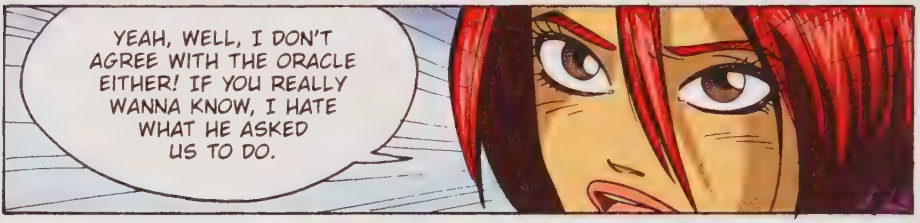

ORUBE?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?

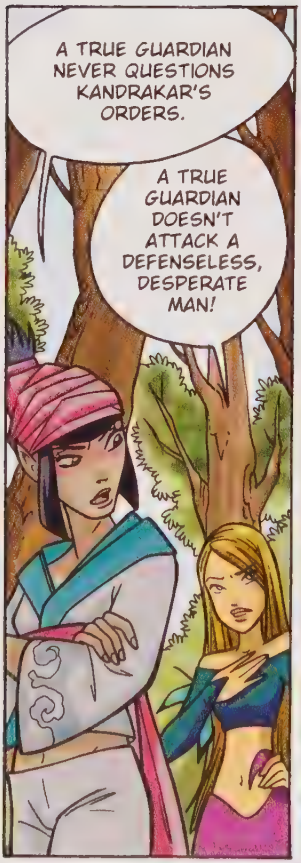
NEVER DO ANYTHING LIKE THAT AGAIN.
!

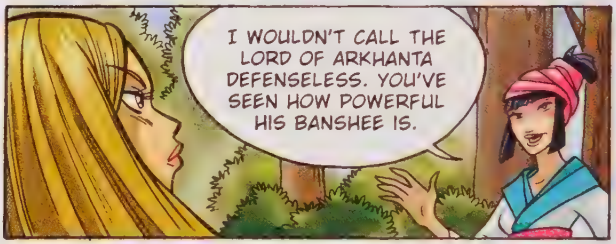

YOU WERE RECKLESS AT THE PALACE, AND YOU PUT EVERY-ONE'S LIFE IN DANGER.
I JUST DID WHAT YOU SHOULD HAVE DONE, WILL.
I'M A WARRIOR!

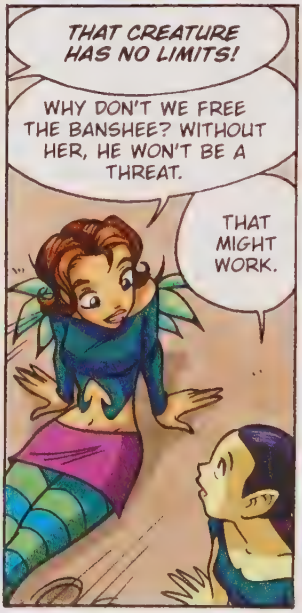
YOU CAN BE WHATEVER YOU WANT, BUT NOW YOU'RE PART OF THIS GROUP! AND THIS GROUP HAS RULES!


IF YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE FOLLOWING THEM, JUST SAY SO. WE CAN MANAGE WITHOUT YOU.
YOU WANT ME TO LEAVE? THE ORACLE WOULDN'T AGREE.


YEAH, WELL, I DON'T AGREE WITH THE ORACLE EITHER! IF YOU REALLY WANNA KNOW, I HATE WHAT HE ASKED US TO DO.


A TRUE GUARDIAN NEVER QUESTIONS KANDRAKAR'S ORDERS.
A TRUE GUARDIAN DOESN'T ATTACK A DEFENSELESS, DESPERATE MAN!


I WOULDN'T CALL THE LORD OF ARKHANTA DEFENSELESS. YOU'VE SEEN HOW POWERFUL HIS BANSHEE IS.

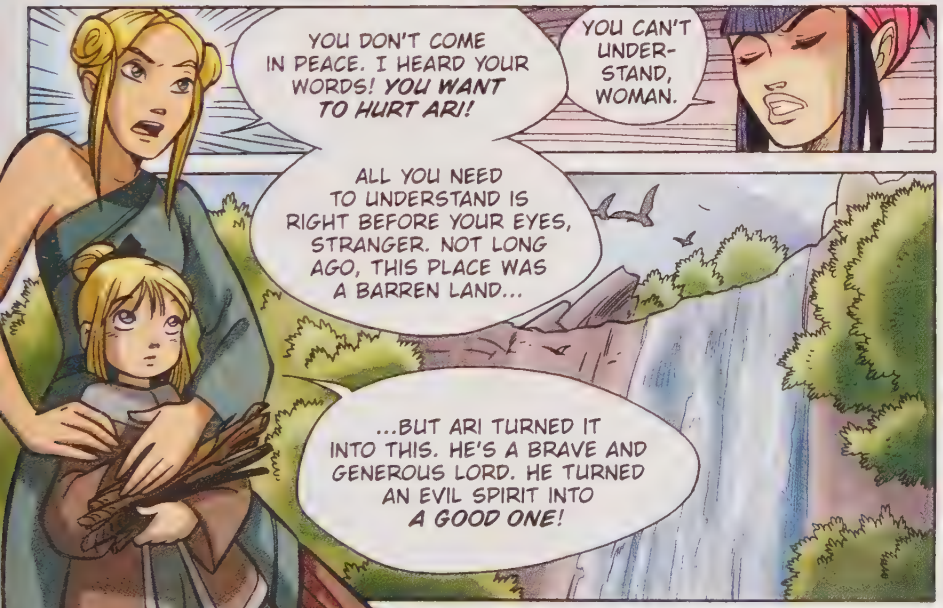

THAT CREATURE HAS NO LIMITS!
WHY DON'T WE FREE THE BANSHEE? WITHOUT HER, HE WON'T BE A THREAT.
THAT MIGHT WORK.

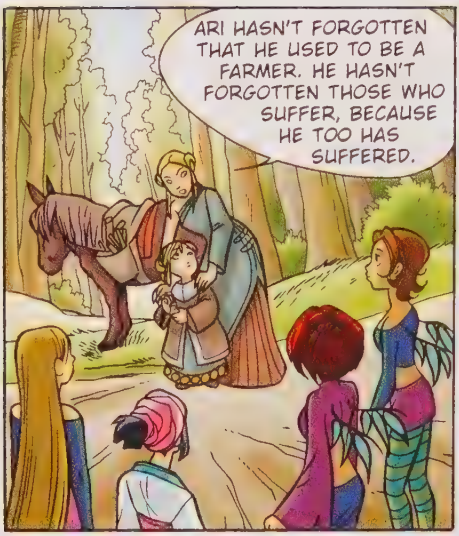
FORGET IT! A BANSHEE CAN ONLY BE FREED BY THE ONE WHO CAPTURED HER.

THAT'S AGAINST THE RULES OF THE SPELL. YOU'LL HAVE TO COME UP WITH ANOTHER PLAN.
FRUSH
CRUNC

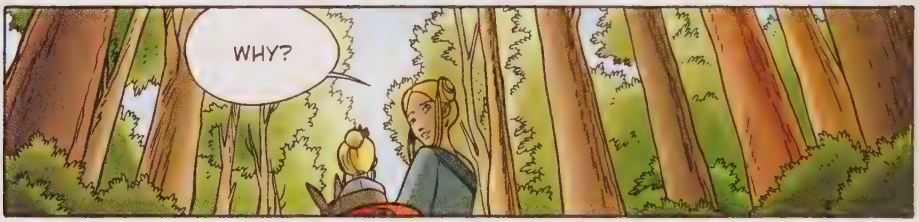
!

COME HERE, PADJA. STAY AWAY FROM THEM!
DON'T BE AFRAID!


YOU DON'T COME IN PEACE. I HEARD YOUR WORDS! YOU WANT TO HURT ARI!
YOU CAN'T UNDER-STAND, WOMAN.
ALL YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND IS RIGHT BEFORE YOUR EYES, STRANGER. NOT LONG AGO, THIS PLACE WAS A BARREN LAND...
...BUT ARI TURNED IT INTO THIS. HE'S A BRAVE AND GENEROUS LORD. HE TURNED AN EVIL SPIRIT INTO A GOOD ONE!


ARI HASN'T FORGOTTEN THAT HE USED TO BE A FARMER. HE HASN'T FORGOTTEN THOSE WHO SUFFER, BECAUSE HE TOO HAS SUFFERED.

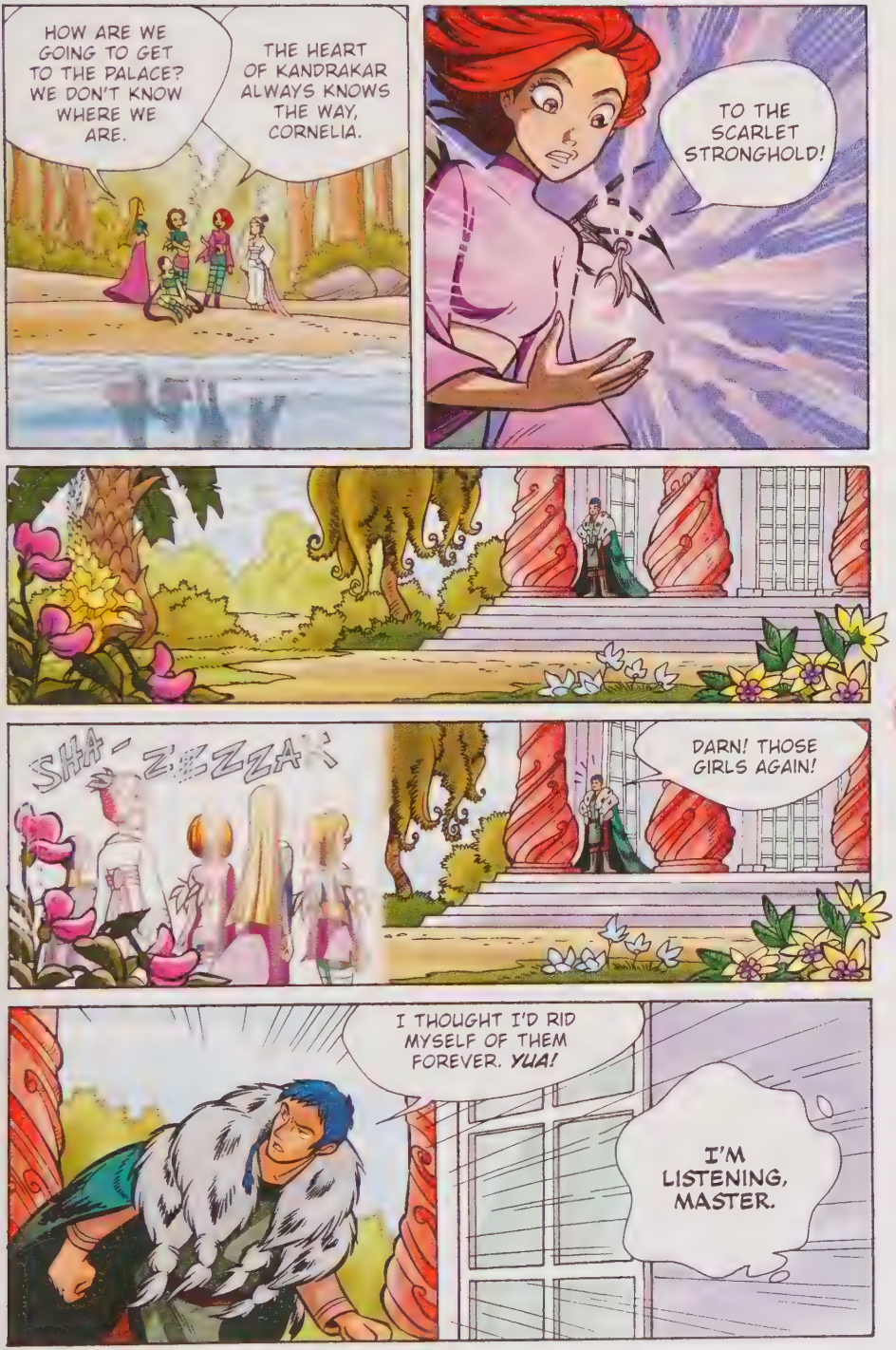
AND TODAY THIS WORLD IS A PROSPEROUS AND HAPPY PLACE THANKS TO HIM. WHY DO YOU WANT TO ATTACK HIM?


WHY?

WANNA ANSWER THAT, ORUBE?
DON'T START ANYTHING, IRMA. I THINK WE SHOULD GET BACK TO THE SCARLET STRONG-HOLD. ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, ARI WILL LISTEN TO US.

YOU WANT TO GO BACK THERE? ARI WILL CHEW US OUT AGAIN!
WE CAN'T JUST BARGE IN WITHOUT A PLAN.

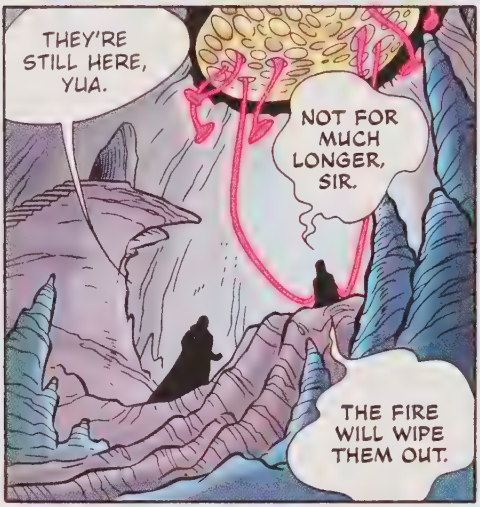
WE DON'T NEED A PLAN. I ONLY WANT TO TALK.
TALKING IS USELESS. WE HAVE TO FIGHT. HE CAUGHT US UNAWARES, EARLIER.


HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET TO THE PALACE? WE DON'T KNOW WHERE WE ARE.
THE HEART OF KANDRAKAR ALWAYS KNOWS THE WAY, CORNELIA.
TO THE SCARLET STRONGHOLD!
SH-Z-ZZA!
DARN! THOSE GIRLS AGAIN!
I THOUGHT I'D RID MYSELF OF THEM FOREVER. YUA!
I'M LISTENING, MASTER.

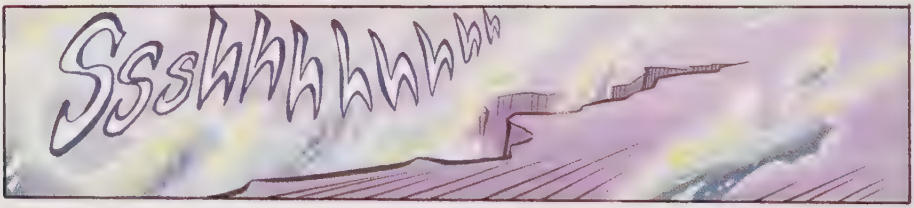
WHAT HAPPENED? WHY ARE KANDRAKAR'S GUARDIANS STILL HERE?
THOSE GIRLS ARE STRONGER THAN I THOUGHT, SIR.
SEAL ALL ACCESS TO THE PALACE, BANSHEE. CLOSE EVERY WINDOW, BLOCK EVERY CREVICE. NO ONE ENTERS MY STRONG-HOLD!
YES, MY LORD.
WE DID IT. REMEMBER, WE'RE HERE TO TALK, NOT FIGHT.
OH!
NOW, BANSHEE, WIPE OUT THE ORACLE'S GUARDIANS. DO YOUR WORST!

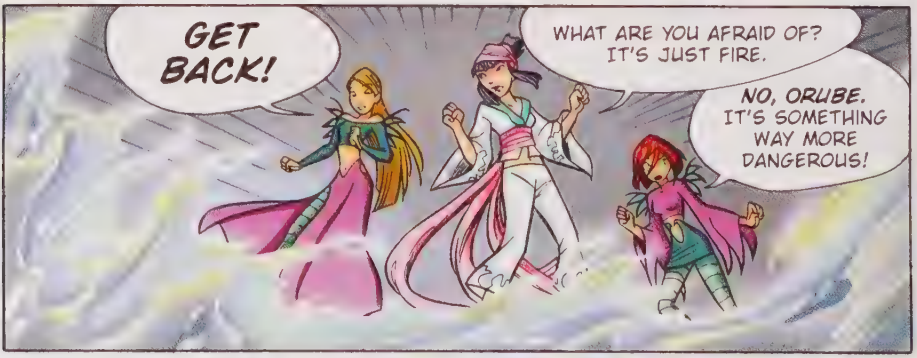
AND DON'T DISAPPOINT ME AGAIN!
PLIT
PLIT
AS ALWAYS, YOUR WISH WILL BE GRANTED, MY LORD.
GREAT HOSPITALITY! HE SEES US COMING AND DOES THIS?
STOP WHINING. HE COULD'VE DONE MUCH WORSE.
KROOOOOM
MAYBE HE IS...
KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN, GUYS. I DON'T LIKE THIS.
YOU'RE TELLING ME!
ZZZZRRRAY

ARI! COME OUT AND LISTEN TO US!


THEY'RE STILL HERE, YUA.
NOT FOR MUCH LONGER, SIR.
THE FIRE WILL WIPE THEM OUT.

"THE ICY FLAME THAT BURNS ALL LIFE!"
!


Sssshhhhhhhh


GET BACK!
WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF? IT'S JUST FIRE.
NO, ORUBE. IT'S SOMETHING WAY MORE DANGEROUS!

THESE FLAMES ARE *ALIVE*, AND THEY HAVE IT IN FOR US!

IF TARANEE WERE HERE, SHE'D KNOW WHAT TO DO!

TARANEE...

WOOOSHH

I KNOW THEY THINK I'M A ROOKIE...THAT THEY'RE BETTER THAN ME...

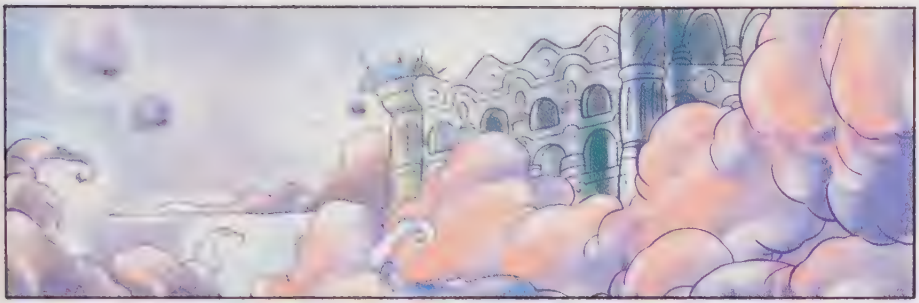
...BUT NOW THEY'LL SEE I'M NOT AFRAID OF ANYTHING!

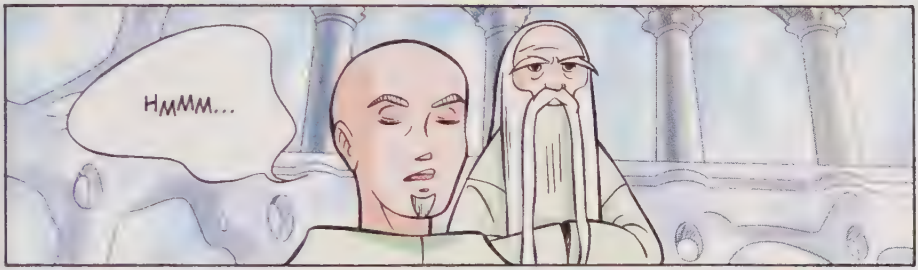
SHA-ZZAK

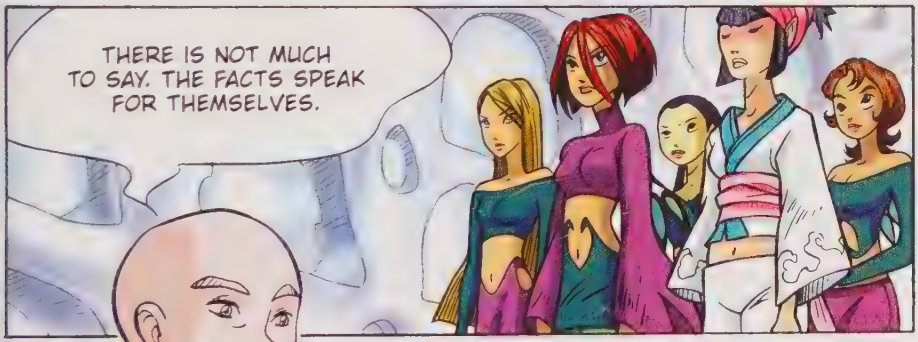
WHAT'S SHE DOING? IS SHE NUTS?

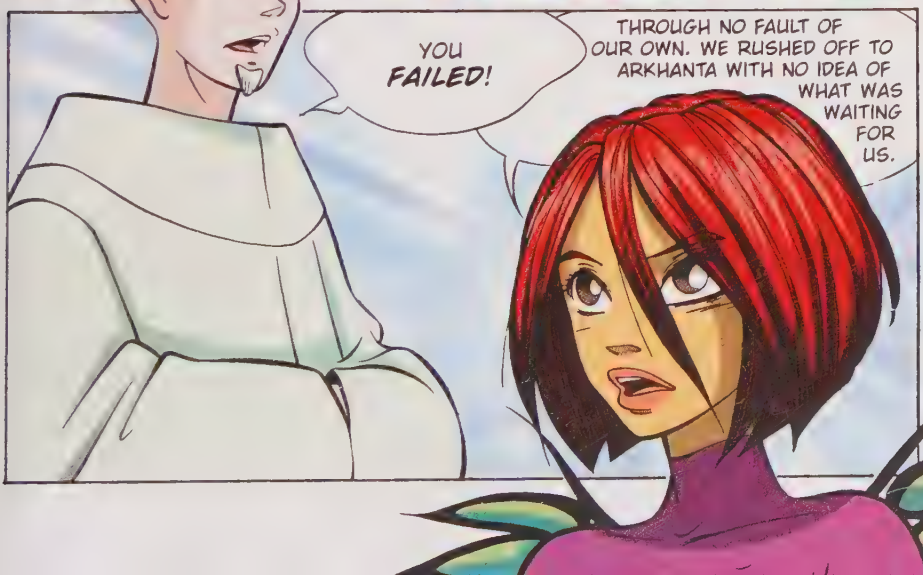
ORUBE! MOVE!

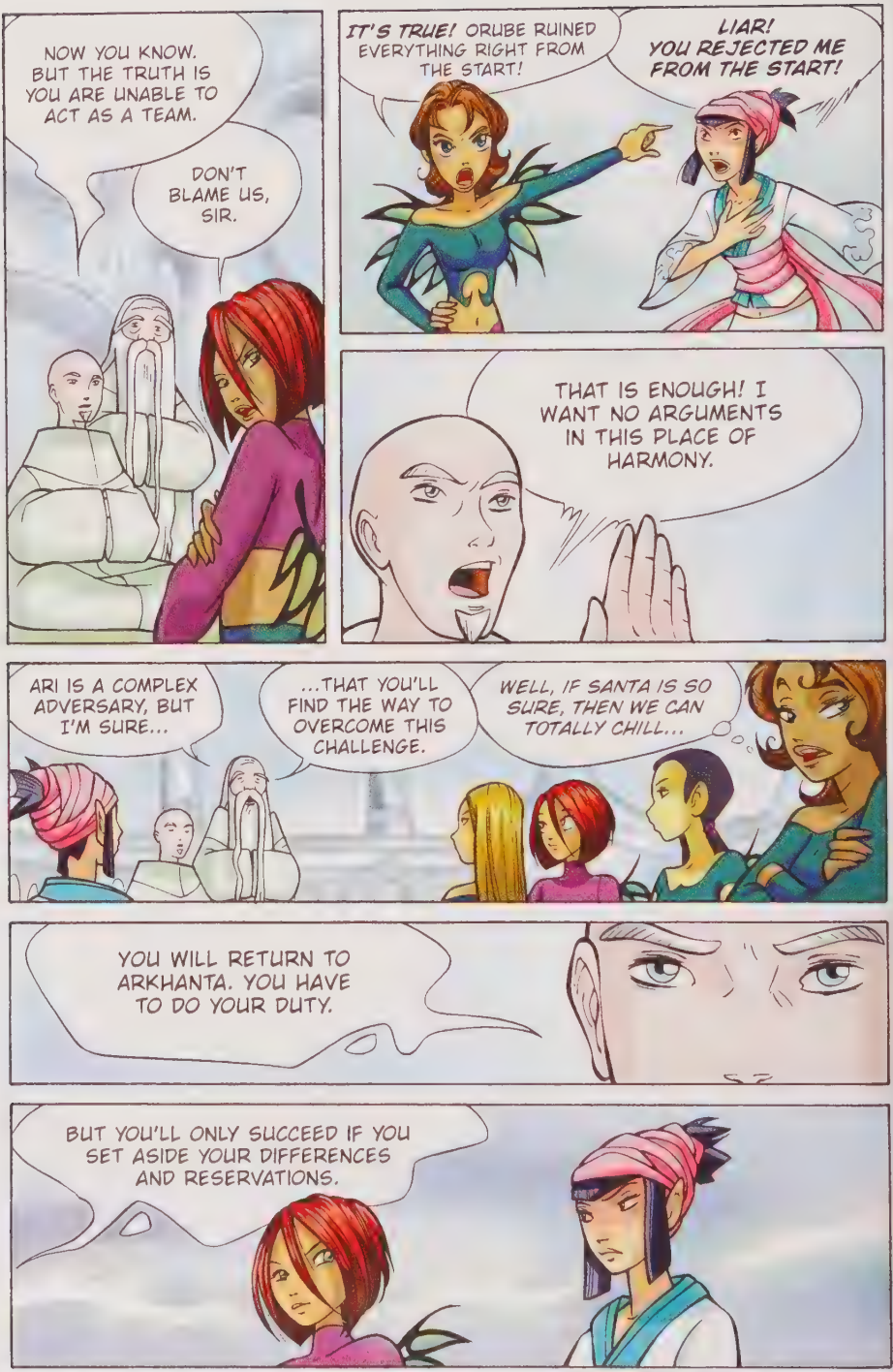
WE'RE LEAVING, AND YOU'RE COMING WITH US.
I'M NOT AFRAID OF GETTING SINGED, CORNELIA!
A WARRIOR NEVER FLEES A BATTLE!
A SMART WARRIOR GOES BACK HOME IN ONE PIECE!
THE ORACLE SAYS SHE WAS LUBA'S BEST STUDENT.
I GUESS SHE WAS IN A CLASS OF ONE...
WE'VE WASTED TOO MUCH TIME. WE'RE SURROUNDED!
WE HAVE NO CHOICE, THEN...
BACK TO KANDRAKAR!
SHAWAAH

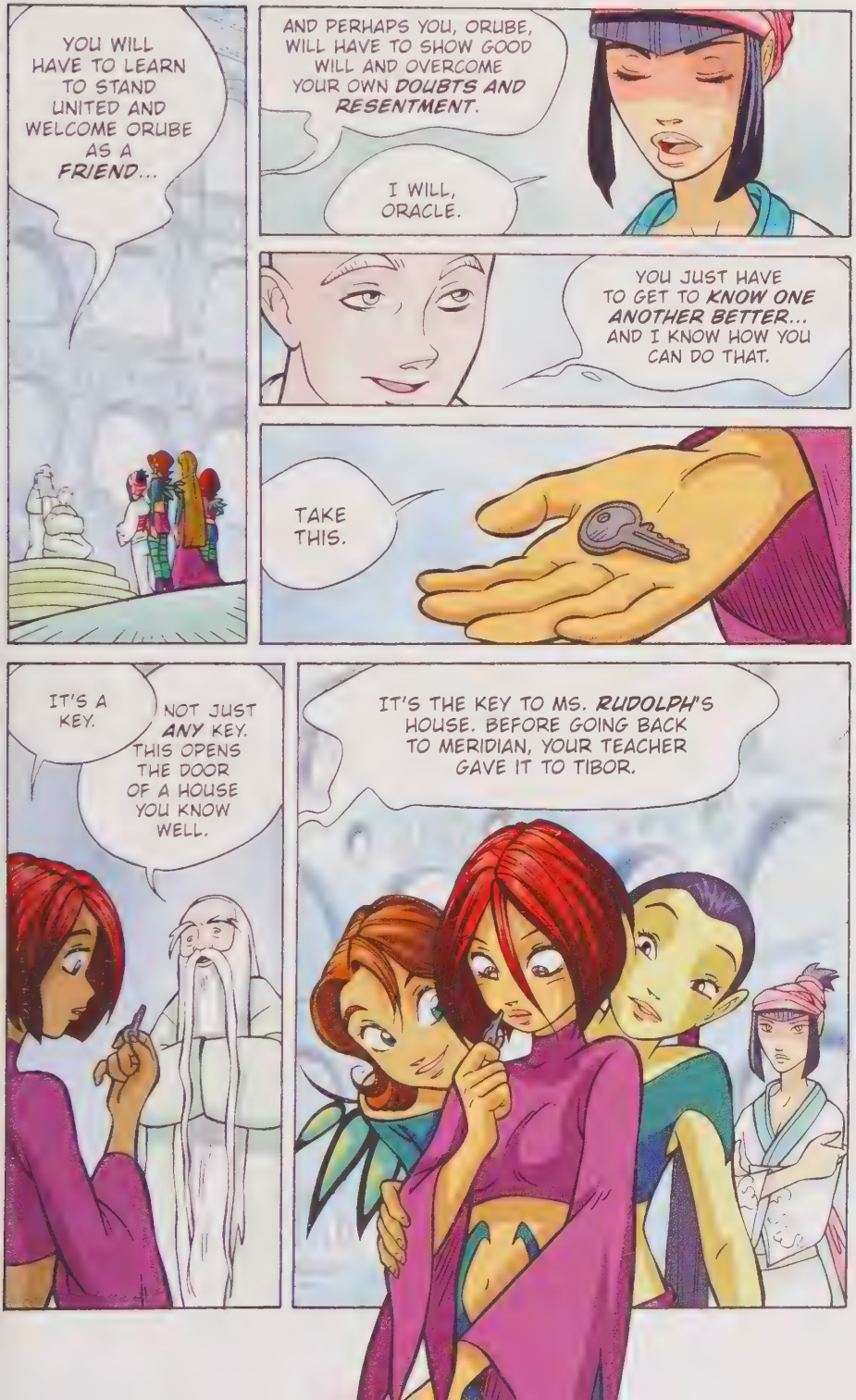


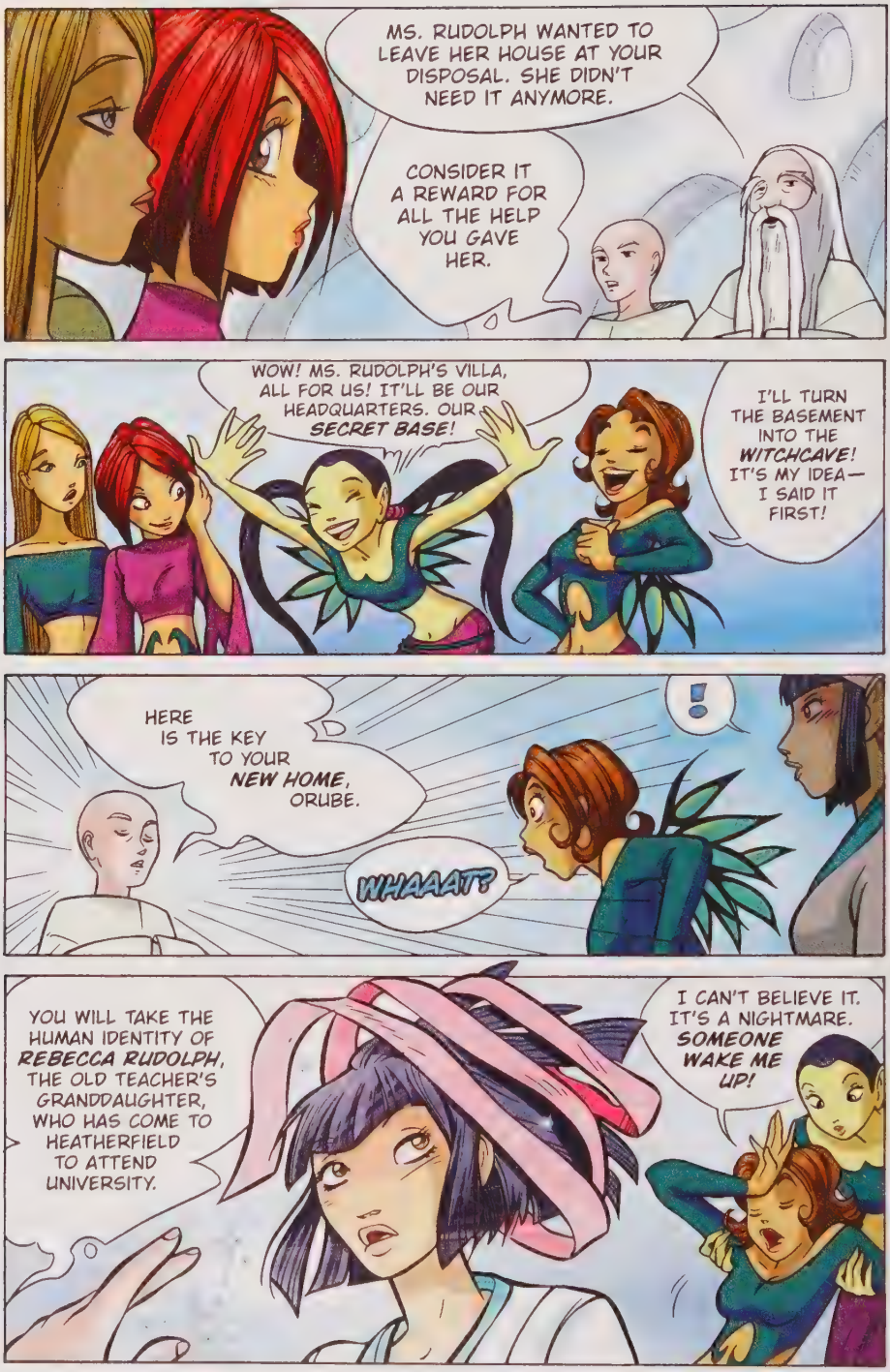

HMMM...

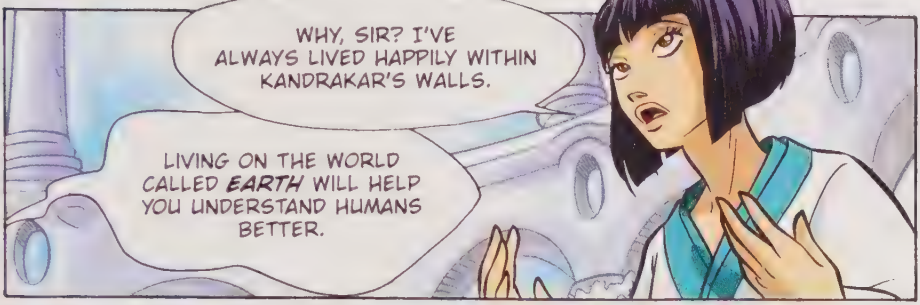

THERE IS NOT MUCH TO SAY. THE FACTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

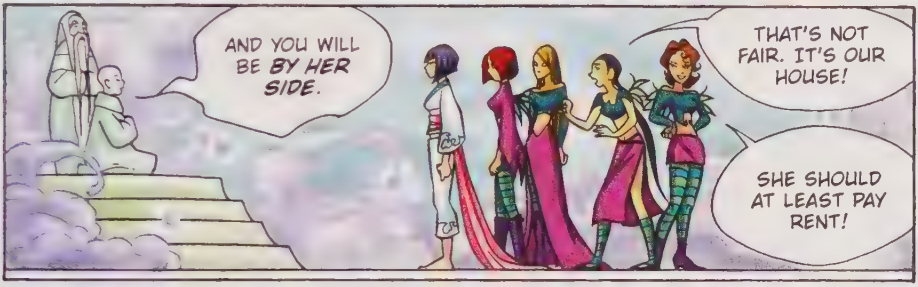

YOU FAILED!
THROUGH NO FAULT OF OUR OWN. WE RUSHED OFF TO ARKHANTA WITH NO IDEA OF WHAT WAS WAITING FOR US.

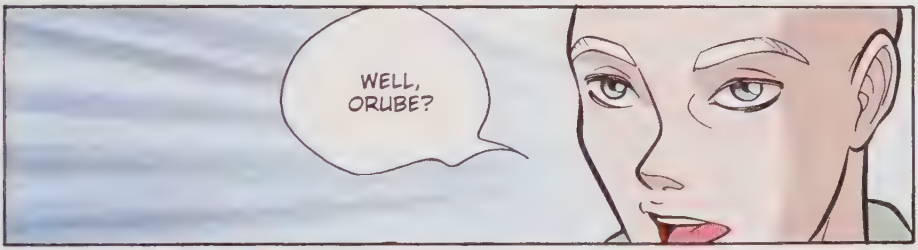

NOW YOU KNOW. BUT THE TRUTH IS YOU ARE UNABLE TO ACT AS A TEAM.
DON'T BLAME US, SIR.
IT'S TRUE! ORUBE RUINED EVERYTHING RIGHT FROM THE START!
LIAR! YOU REJECTED ME FROM THE START!
THAT IS ENOUGH! I WANT NO ARGUMENTS IN THIS PLACE OF HARMONY.
ARI IS A COMPLEX ADVERSARY, BUT I'M SURE...
...THAT YOU'LL FIND THE WAY TO OVERCOME THIS CHALLENGE.
WELL, IF SANTA IS SO SURE, THEN WE CAN TOTALLY CHILL...
YOU WILL RETURN TO ARKHANTA. YOU HAVE TO DO YOUR DUTY.
BUT YOU'LL ONLY SUCCEED IF YOU SET ASIDE YOUR DIFFERENCES AND RESERVATIONS.

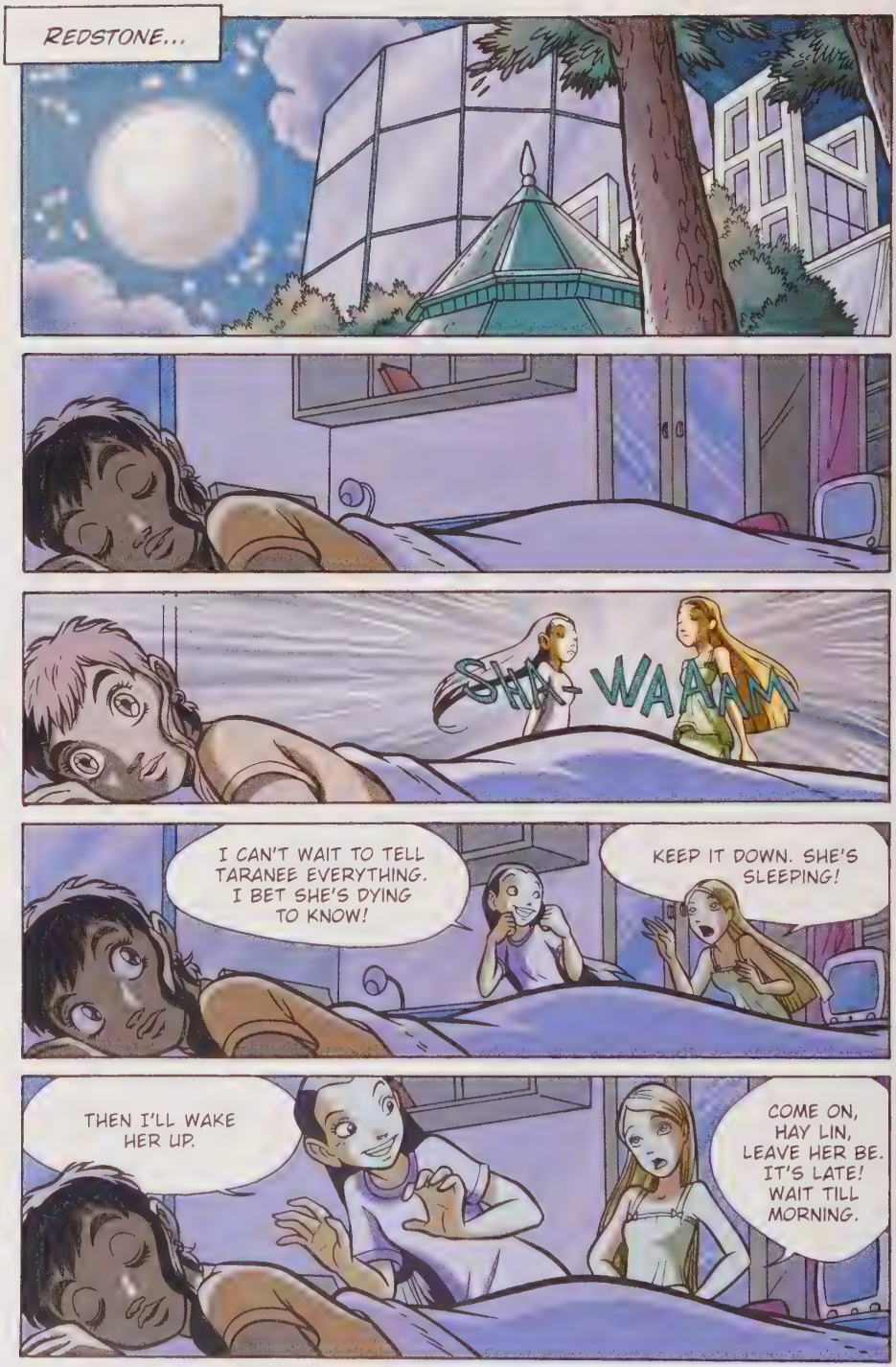

YOU WILL HAVE TO LEARN TO STAND UNITED AND WELCOME ORUBE AS A FRIEND...
AND PERHAPS YOU, ORUBE, WILL HAVE TO SHOW GOOD WILL AND OVERCOME YOUR OWN DOUBTS AND RESENTMENT.
I WILL, ORACLE.
YOU JUST HAVE TO GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER BETTER... AND I KNOW HOW YOU CAN DO THAT.
TAKE THIS.
IT'S A KEY.
NOT JUST ANY KEY. THIS OPENS THE DOOR OF A HOUSE YOU KNOW WELL.
IT'S THE KEY TO MS. RUDOLPH'S HOUSE. BEFORE GOING BACK TO MERIDIAN, YOUR TEACHER GAVE IT TO TIBOR.

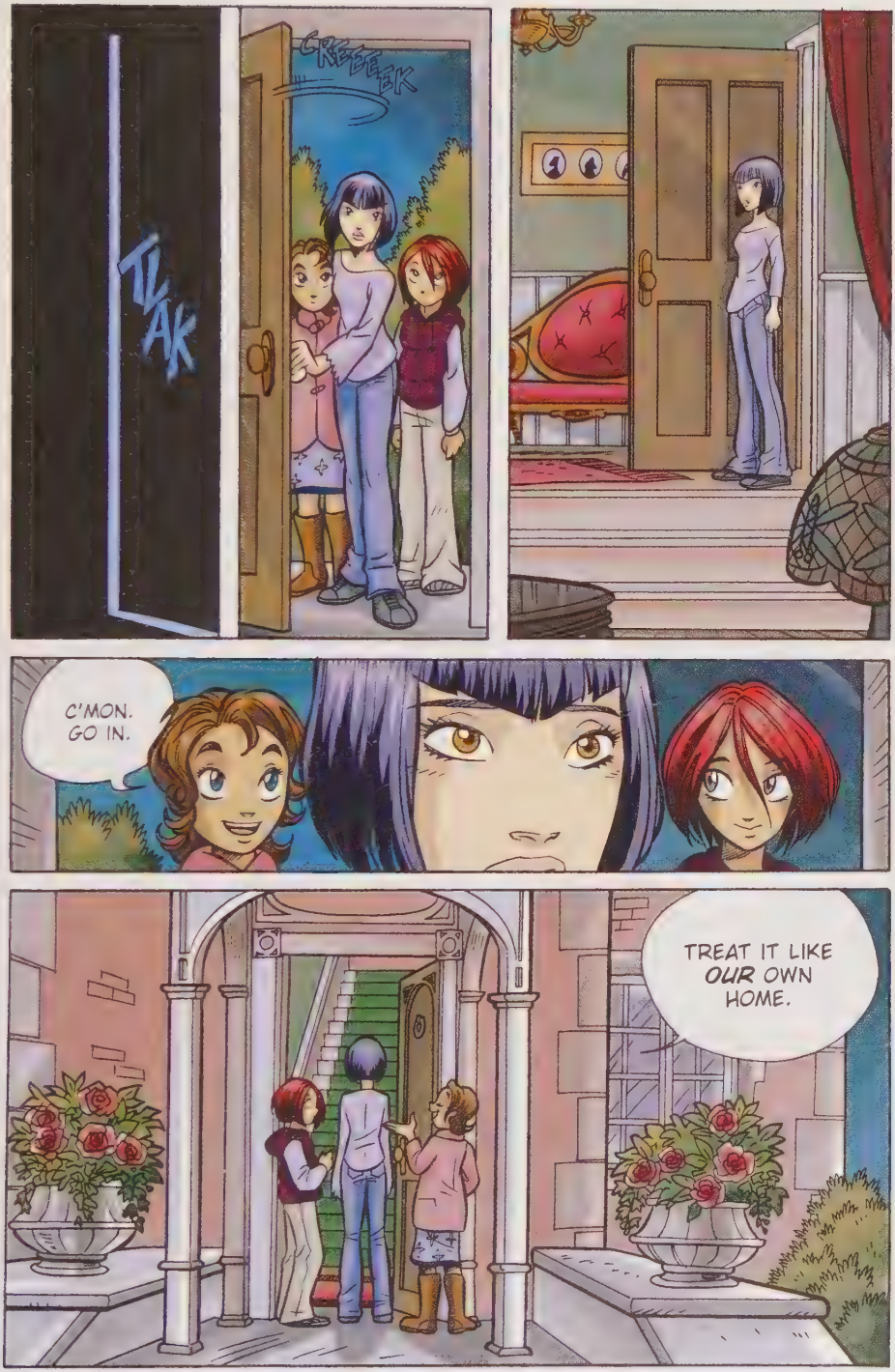

MS. RUDOLPH WANTED TO LEAVE HER HOUSE AT YOUR DISPOSAL. SHE DIDN'T NEED IT ANYMORE.
CONSIDER IT A REWARD FOR ALL THE HELP YOU GAVE HER.
WOW! MS. RUDOLPH'S VILLA, ALL FOR US! IT'LL BE OUR HEADQUARTERS. OUR SECRET BASE!
I'LL TURN THE BASEMENT INTO THE WITCHCAVE! IT'S MY IDEA— I SAID IT FIRST!
HERE IS THE KEY TO YOUR NEW HOME, ORUBE.
!
WHAAAT?
YOU WILL TAKE THE HUMAN IDENTITY OF REBECCA RUDOLPH, THE OLD TEACHER'S GRANDDAUGHTER, WHO HAS COME TO HEATHERFIELD TO ATTEND UNIVERSITY.
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. IT'S A NIGHTMARE. SOMEONE WAKE ME UP!

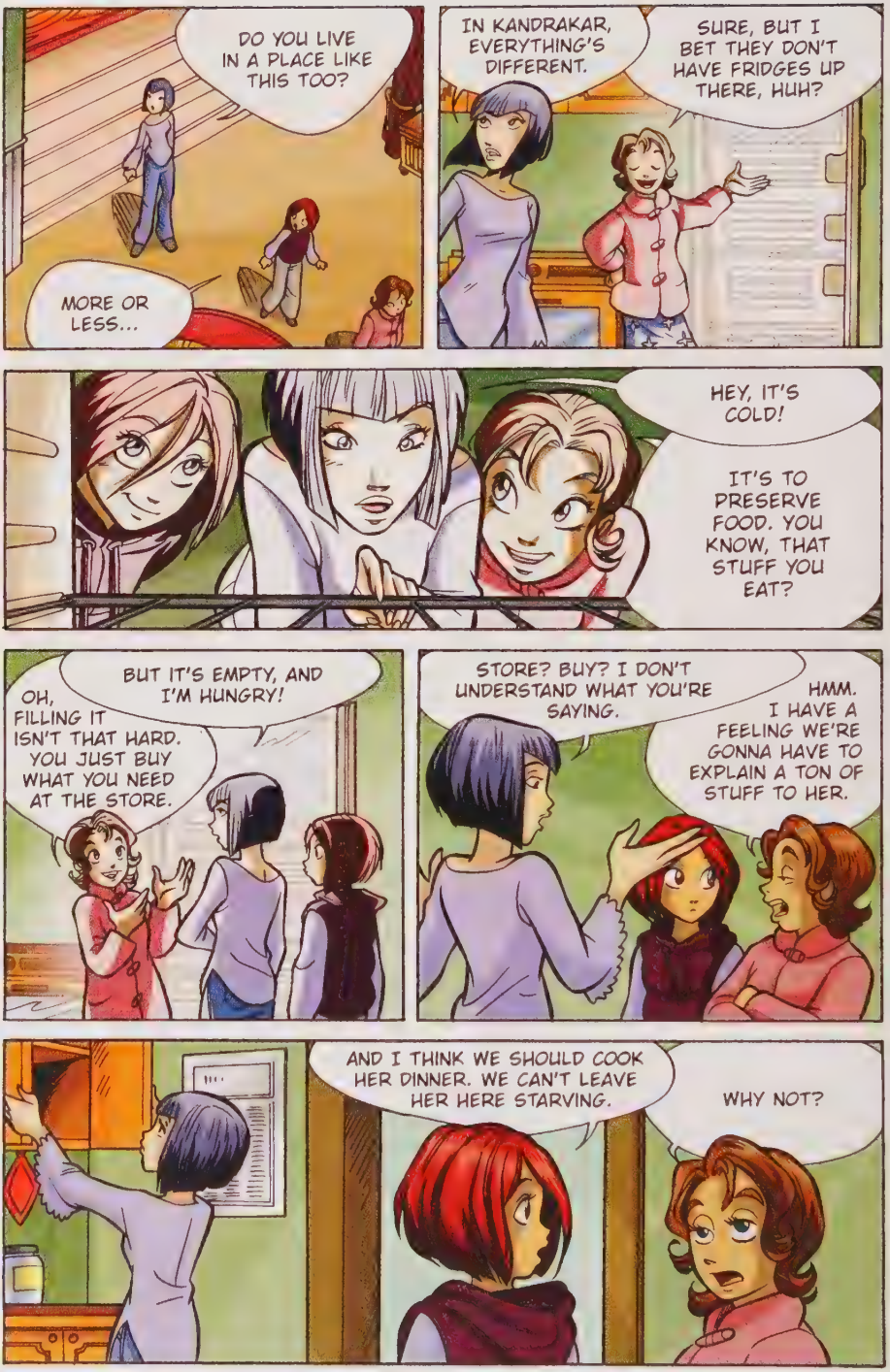

WHY, SIR? I'VE ALWAYS LIVED HAPPILY WITHIN KANDRAKAR'S WALLS.
LIVING ON THE WORLD CALLED *EARTH* WILL HELP YOU UNDERSTAND HUMANS BETTER.


AND YOU WILL BE *BY HER SIDE*.
THAT'S NOT FAIR. IT'S OUR HOUSE!
SHE SHOULD AT LEAST PAY RENT!


WELL, ORUBE?


REDSTONE...
SHA-WAAAM
I CAN'T WAIT TO TELL TARANEE EVERYTHING. I BET SHE'S DYING TO KNOW!
KEEP IT DOWN. SHE'S SLEEPING!
THEN I'LL WAKE HER UP.
COME ON, HAY LIN, LEAVE HER BE. IT'S LATE! WAIT TILL MORNING.


TLAK
CREEEEEEK
C'MON. GO IN.
TREAT IT LIKE *OUR* OWN HOME.


DO YOU LIVE IN A PLACE LIKE THIS TOO?
MORE OR LESS...
IN KANDRAKAR, EVERYTHING'S DIFFERENT.
SURE, BUT I BET THEY DON'T HAVE FRIDGES UP THERE, HUH?
HEY, IT'S COLD!
IT'S TO PRESERVE FOOD. YOU KNOW, THAT STUFF YOU EAT?
BUT IT'S EMPTY, AND I'M HUNGRY!
OH, FILLING IT ISN'T THAT HARD. YOU JUST BUY WHAT YOU NEED AT THE STORE.
STORE? BUY? I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.
HMM. I HAVE A FEELING WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO EXPLAIN A TON OF STUFF TO HER.
AND I THINK WE SHOULD COOK HER DINNER. WE CAN'T LEAVE HER HERE STARVING.
WHY NOT?

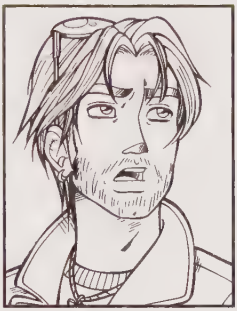
HERE, ORUBE. IT'S ALL I HAVE. IT'S NOT MUCH, BUT...
STRAP
=MUNCH=
=MUNCH=
=MUNCH=
THEY'RE NOT VERY GOOD.
I THINK I'LL EAT THE REST LATER.
HELLO, PIZZAFLASH? I'D LIKE TO ORDER, PLEASE...
YOU'LL SEE SOON, ORUBE. IT'S NOT THAT HARD.
THE END

Read on in Volume 8!

W.I.T.C.H. Planet

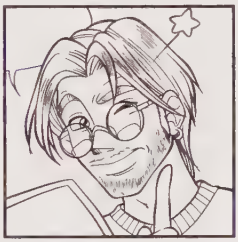
Ralph Sylla

Substitute Teacher



The new computer science substitute teacher at Sheffield Institute. He was brought in as a temporary replacement for the mysterious Mr. Bottlom.

Charming



Behind his handsome looks, charming Sylla hides a secrety identity: He's a special agent tasked with investigating Will & Co., though they don't know that...

Super-detective

A colleague of Agents Maria Medina and Joel McTiennan (with whom Will, Irma, Taranee, Cornelia, and Hay Lin have already had dealings), Ralph Sylla is a very experienced detective.

Mystery Buff

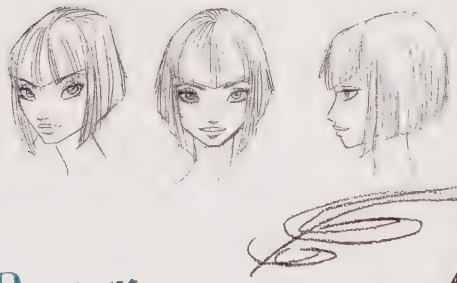
Often embarking on dangerous undercover missions, Sylla specializes in unusual cases, revealing his passion for "mysteries." Detective Sylla is determined to discover W.I.T.C.H.'s secrets at all costs!

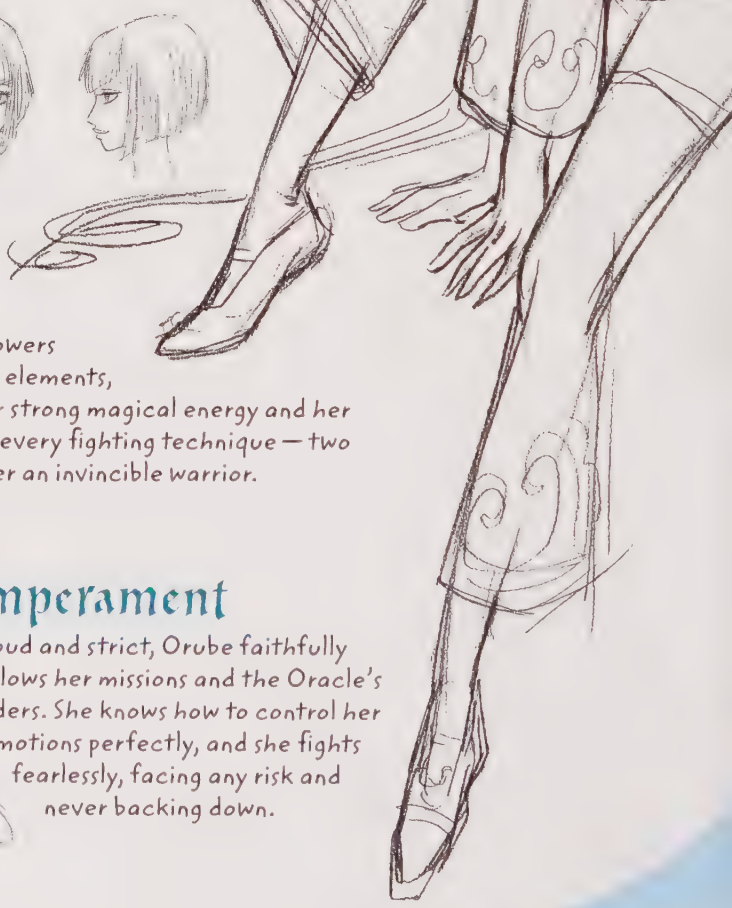
W.I.T.C.H. Planet

Orube

Who Is She?

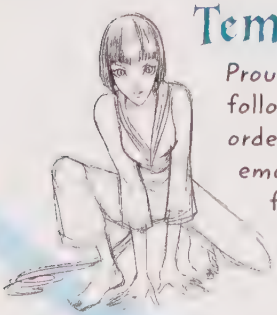
Orube is a warrior from the distant world Basiliade. She was the favorite pupil of Luba, one of the most important members of the Congregation and the Custodian of the Droplets, who perished in a battle for W.I.T.C.H.'s and Caleb's lives in the dramatic days of the fight against Nerissa.





Powers

Orube doesn't have powers connected to the four elements, but she can rely on her strong magical energy and her perfect knowledge of every fighting technique — two qualities that make her an invincible warrior.



Temperament

Proud and strict, Orube faithfully follows her missions and the Oracle's orders. She knows how to control her emotions perfectly, and she fights fearlessly, facing any risk and never backing down.

Her Role

After spending a long time in Kandrakar's fortress for her training, Orube temporarily replaces Taranee on the W.I.T.C.H. team. (After the Oracle's intrusion into her private life, Taranee has decided to take a break from her role as a Guardian.)

Rebecca Rudolph

Following the Oracle's orders, Orube leaves the fortress and moves to Heatherfield to get to know her new companions and their world. Publicly, she poses as student Rebecca Rudolph, Ms. Rudolph's granddaughter, in order to attend university.

Challenges

The new warrior, with her catlike traits, will continue living in Ms. Rudolph's house and is sure to have some trouble adapting to life in Heatherfield, where she'll feel like..."a cat out of water!"

Part III. A Crisis on Both Worlds • Volume 1

7

Series Created by Elisabetta Gnone
Comic Art Direction: Alessandro Barbucci, Barbara Canepa

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Bloom

Will

Problems on Every Front

The girls seem to face new challenges everywhere they turn, and the pressure is threatening to tear them apart. Even their normal lives aren't free of stress—particularly now that Will's long-absent father is back in the picture. Can the girls pull it together before a new enemy emerges?

Tecna

Aisha

Stella

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